Space and the Contemporary Hollywood Action Sequence

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Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all materials from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the manner in which the action sequences of contemporary Hollywood cinema reflect and constitute ways of imagining space. The thesis proposes that these sequences are highly spatialised presentations of bodily interaction with the world, and as such manifest cultural anxieties regarding the relationship between the individual and the built environment, and work to assure their viewers of the capacity of the human form to survive the disorienting spaces of contemporary architecture, globalisation and technology. In order to demonstrate this, the aesthetic and formal properties of action sequences are read alongside critical work exploring how space shapes social life, including influential texts by Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Fredric Jameson and others. These readings reveal that both action sequences and critical spatial theory are similarly attentive to the difficulties, contradictions and possibilities of built space.

A range of action sequences from Hollywood films of the last fifteen years, including sequences from *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol*, *The International*, *The Bourne Identity*, *The Bourne Supremacy*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *Jumper*, *Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace*, *Sucker Punch*, *Inception*, *Swordfish*, *The Matrix*, *The Matrix Reloaded*, *TRON: Legacy*, *Resident Evil*, *Resident Evil: Afterlife* and *Dredd 3D* are analysed for how they depict space and spatial agency. Rather than concentrating upon the narratives of these films, the chapters of the thesis deal in turn with the ways in which action sequences express contemporary developments within the built environment; the consequences of globalisation; the impact of these spatial changes upon mental life; the challenges to bodily engagement raised by digital technology and cyberspace; and the modifications to representing space on film prompted by stereoscopic exhibition. Examinations of these sequences are used to build a model of the action sequence that suggests spatial appropriation and ideas around place-creation are crucial elements of the form.

Contents

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Introduction

In 1967 Michel Foucault suggested that while the 'great obsession of the nineteenth century' was history, 'with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle', the late twentieth century will 'be above all the epoch of space', in which simultaneity, juxtaposition, and dispersal will be the crucial determinants of cultural life. According to Foucault, the experience of the world at this time 'is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein'.[1] Fredric Jameson and David Harvey extend this idea, describing what they term 'postmodernity' – contemporary globalised cultural and economic configurations – as being in part defined by a synchronic experience of multiple times and spaces.[2] Tracking the rise of dominant, though frequently hidden or disguised, operations of spatial practice, production and control, the work of Henri Lefebvre provides vital groundwork for any study focusing on the spaces and places of lived experience in the twentieth century, doing more than most to stimulate critical awareness of how space is produced.[3] Michel de Certeau's work on the intersection of personal experience and spatial restriction has also proved influential.[4] More recently, Doreen Massey's work has consistently called for an alternative mode of spatial thinking to overcome the problems she and these other writers identify in prevailing arrangements.[5] This heightened attention to space, whereby the tools and language of geographical analysis are used to understand how space influences and is influenced by the actions of individuals, and the underlying critical condition that the critical discourse seeks to describe – the shift to an 'epoch of space' – has come to be called the 'spatial turn'.

It will be the argument of this thesis that these discourses related to the spatial turn can illuminate our understanding of the action sequences of contemporary Hollywood

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[1] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', Jay Miskowiec (trans.), *Diacritics*, 16.1 (Spring 1986), pp. 22–27 (p. 22). Written as the basis for a lecture in 1967, this text was published in French in 1984 and in translation in the journal *Diacritics* in 1986. Throughout the thesis dates referred to in these references will be to the edition of the text that is being used (translated or otherwise), not the original date of publication (information which can be found in the bibliography at the end of the thesis).

[2] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 154; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, Mass., & Oxford: Blackwells, 1994), pp. 264–265.

[3] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith (trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991b).

[4] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven Rendall (trans.) (Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1988).

[5] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005).

cinema. Using the work of Lefebvre, de Certeau and others, the forthcoming analyses will reveal the inherent emphasis placed upon space in action sequences, such sequences depicting space as an obstacle to be overcome, controlled or destroyed, but above all *survived*. The prominence of spatial concerns will be demonstrated through a series of case studies that each focus in turn upon different aspects of contemporary space and the way action sequences represent these aspects, representations that will be shown to have important corollaries in critical spatial theory. For instance, and crucially, Lefebvre's ideas around abstract space and de Certeau's concept of tactical spatial appropriation are both highly pertinent to any understanding of the workings of action sequences, these and other ideas around the restrictions and possibilities of space finding expression in the intense spatial engagement of these sequences. This is not to claim that the filmmakers involved are consciously drawing on this critical work; rather, both the theory and the films are responding to developments in the built environment as well as broader cultural perceptions of it. Key questions this thesis seeks to address, then, include the extent to which action sequences mobilise ideas around the habitability of space through their visual representation of physical activity within it; how these mobilisations can articulate particular aspects of contemporary space; and why these ideas find the expressions that they do within such a popular form. In short, if the action sequence pays such close attention to space, then how does this attention function and why does it exist in the first place?

Exploring these questions using critical spatial theory will demonstrate that action sequences are expressions of both anxiety and release, providing empowering presentations of spatial mastery that assure viewers of the capacity of the human form to persevere within potentially overwhelming built environments and globally-linked networks. This assurance, however, operates within a nexus of capital production, ideological conservatism and somewhat disembodied visual representation, all of which complicates – but does not negate – the embodied presentations of spatial mastery.

Space, this thesis asserts, is of fundamental importance to the action sequence. The protagonist of such sequences must engage with the spaces in which they find themselves threatened, using it in new and unexpected ways, turning it to their advantage and in doing so revealing previously unseen facets of it. They appropriate the spaces of action sequences, even if only temporarily, and this is fundamental to their

status as a successful action hero or heroine. As Steve Neale notes when defining the action-adventure genre, 'even where locations are restricted, as they often are in prison and submarine films, space, the control of space, and the ability to move freely through space or from one space to another are always important'.[6] This importance placed upon space indicates how the action sequence functions as a site of spatial inquiry within these films. These sequences manifest spatial anxieties in a spectacular form, and in their presentations of personal spatial agency they reflect a wider trend towards more attentive appreciation of lived spatial experience that is a fundamental part of the spatial turn. While they are a clear expression of hegemonic capitalist cultural production, the action sequences of blockbuster Hollywood cinema nonetheless (indeed, because of this fact) dramatise the restrictions and possibilities of space by connecting with it in a direct and forceful manner through the actions of the central character. These sequences utilise and re-present aspects of contemporary space that might generate unease or apprehension, and focus upon the ways in which it can delimit or foster certain kinds of movement.

The action genre is frequently understood as a site of ideological anxiety in which cultural crises are worked through, and in the heightened and hyperbolised spatial negotiation of action sequences unease regarding contemporary space is made visible: these sequences demonstrate spatial restrictions as well as ways of overcoming these restrictions. This engagement with and destruction of the environment reveals elements of instrumental spatiality that are normally hidden from view. As Massey, a human geographer, suggests in a 1999 edition of the film journal *Screen*,

> the potential for creative dialogue between people in film studies and those in geography is enormous. It has already been productive, and I think could be more so. A concern with mutual construction of spatiality and social relations (and identities) is clearly something which we share.[7]

The intention here is, in part, to further this dialogue by indicating how geographical concepts related to space and place can aid an understanding of the action sequence of contemporary cinema. The analysis of these sequences will therefore draw on a range of theoretical work that aims to elucidate the characteristics of late twentieth and early

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[6] Steve Neale, 'Action-Adventure As Hollywood Genre', in Yvonne Tasker (ed), *Action and Adventure Cinema* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 71–83 (p. 74).

[7] Doreen Massey & Karen Lury, 'Making Connections', *Screen* 40.3 (Autumn 1999), pp. 239–228 (p. 233).

twenty-first century space, and will focus upon the representational strategies at work in the films – how space is created using framing, production design, editing and mise-en-scene – as well as the presence of an onscreen body as a site of audience alignment and spatial understanding.

This introductory chapter will clarify the terms action genre and action sequence, and take note of previous work on the depiction of space by this genre. This existing work, while attentive to the problems inherent in defining the action genre *as* a genre, will be shown to establish a critical model centred on representations of the body and ideology rather than on space, but that can nonetheless fruitfully form the foundation for such spatial analysis. That is, it is often conceded, as Neale does above, that space is very important in the action film, but how or why, or in what ways this importance is represented are all issues often left unexplored. As this is the focus of the thesis itself, this section will not explore these too deeply, instead situating the coming discussion within critical considerations of the action film and action sequence. Following this, the spatial turn will be analysed in more detail, introducing concepts surrounding the production and imagination of space that will be central to the following chapters. The impact of capitalism upon space will be shown to be the focus of the work of Henri Lefebvre, with many late twentieth century writers subsequently using his work to describe the spaces of what they refer to as postmodernity and postmodernism. Finally, a thesis methodology will be sketched, followed by a complete chapter breakdown.

The Action Film and Action Sequence

Neale observes that films have been described as 'action' or 'action-adventure' since the 1910s, and that these films form a 'tradition' that has roots in nineteenth-century melodrama and encompasses a wide range of genres, including 'westerns, swashbucklers, war films, disaster films, space operas, epics, safari films, jungle films, and so on'.[8] Accordingly, he does not classify action films as a genre in themselves, and neither does José Arroyo, who states in the preface to his edited volume on the subject that 'action/spectacle' is a kind of cinema that 'cannot quite constitute a mode but which exceeds the boundaries of a genre'.[9] Classification is difficult because, as James

[8] Neale, 2004, p. 74.
[9] José Arroyo, 'Preface', in José Arroyo (ed), *Action/Spectacle Cinema: A Sight and Sound Reader* (London: BFI, 2000a), pp. v–vi (p. v).

M. Welsh and Yvonne Tasker have each noted, 'action films often interface with other genres'[10] and action cinema itself 'has come to stand metonymically for the post-classical Hollywood blockbuster in much contemporary criticism'.[11] These observations demonstrate the problems inherent in any rigid categorisation of this type of film.

However, while action (or, in Arroyo's formulation, action/spectacle) cinema may have 'become such a popular type of Hollywood cinema as to be almost synonymous with it',[12] a recognisable form can nonetheless be discerned, arising in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Larry Gross classifies this the 'Big Loud Action Movie', a style of cinema indebted to David Lean and Akira Kurosawa but which, in the blockbuster films of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, became focused on technological display, self-deprecating humour, and simple plots relying on chases rather than narrative complexity.[13] The cost and scope of these films is seen as inversely proportionally to their intellectual content. As Mark Gallagher suggests, action films focus more upon 'rhythmic spectacle' than upon representations of reality, and appeal to viewers 'at a visual and physical rather than intellectual or sentimental level'.[14]

This appeal is frequently understood to be highly and restrictively coded. Barry Keith Grant, for example, suggests that the contemporary action film works to reassert 'male power and privilege' after the cultural upheavals of the 1960s, their narrative and aesthetic approaches justifying and perpetuating prevailing patriarchal, political and ideological systems, including conservative dogma and relentless consumerism.[15] This interpretation has been extensively argued in the highly influential work of Tasker and Susan Jeffords. For them the action film relies upon expressions of physical domination – invariably coded as masculine – which affirm an 'active understanding of masculinity'[16] and generate sensations of national unity with a patriarchal, male-centred focus.[17] This active masculinity is a response to the threats posed by feminism to male

[10] James M. Welsh, 'Action Films: The Serious, The Ironic, The Postmodern', in Wheeler Winston Dixon (ed), *Film Genre 2000: New Critical Essays*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 161–176 (p. 170).
[11] Yvonne Tasker, 'Introduction', in Tasker (ed), *Action and Adventure Cinema*, pp. 1–13 (p. 3).
[12] José Arroyo, 'Introduction', in Arroyo (ed), *Action/Spectacle Cinema* (2000b), pp. vii–xiv (p. viii).
[13] Larry Gross, 'Big and Loud', in Arroyo (ed), *Action/Spectacle Cinema*, pp. 3–9 (p. 7).
[14] Mark Gallagher, *Action Figures: Men, Action Films, and Contemporary Adventure Narratives* (New York & Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 53.
[15] Barry Keith Grant, *Film Genre: From Iconography to Ideology* (London: Wallflower, 2007), p. 84.
[16] Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 2.
[17] Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), p. 27. Tasker moreover

agency and the perceived waning of physicalised male influence in an increasingly technologised world.

Gallagher explicitly updates the early 1990s work of Tasker and Jeffords in his book *Action Figures*, published in 2006, in which he examines the negotiations around performative masculinity staged by the action film. He likewise suggests that they 'offer scenarios of empowerment in which viewers' actual physical and social limitations become irrelevant',[18] their protagonists inherently embodying 'fantasies of domination over natural and artificial worlds'.[19] Though for Gallagher, as for Tasker and Jeffords, these fantasies are male-coded and male-centred, his descriptions of the empowering and compensatory operations of the form are taken up in a more comprehensive manner by Lisa Purse. For her, the genre displays 'fantasies of empowerment' centred on a human, rather than gendered, body.[20] The appeal of action films is, in part, the 'fantasy of mapping – and sometimes destroying – urban space through assertive, self-directed movement', movement to which the viewer is able to relate through the presence of the onscreen body of the action protagonist.[21] For Purse, action cinema remains, in the twenty-first century, 'body-centred' in its 'subject-matter and its preoccupations, its spectacles and modes of presentation'.[22] Through her focus on 'the body' rather than the male body, Purse opens up critical understanding of the workings of the action sequence.

Tasker, Jeffords, Gallagher and Purse think about the action genre in ways in which it is 'taken to have something to say', to adopt Tasker's own words.[23] This framework centres upon the body, its displays of mastery in hostile environmental circumstances, and the way this appeals to the viewer: 'images of a physical power', as Tasker points out, can function 'as a counterpoint to an experience of the world defined by restrictive limits'.[24] This establishes a critical base from which the other side of the equation, the spaces through which this body moves, might be examined. These spaces vary greatly

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states in 1993 that 'the action picture has been debated during the 1980s almost exclusively in terms of an imputed ideological conservatism' (Tasker, 1993, p. 58).

[18] Gallagher, 2006, p.6.

[19] Gallagher, 2006, p. 177.

[20] Lisa Purse, *Contemporary Action Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 45. This is not to claim that Purse is not aware of the differences in gender representation – see pp. 76–111.

[21] Purse, 2011, p. 63.

[22] Purse, 2011, p. 54.

[23] Tasker, 1993, p. 5.

[24] Tasker, 1993, p. 127.

(being urban or rural, grandiose or mundane, real or imagined), but they are the vital landscape in which the protagonist acts, the stage upon which physical power and control is demonstrated. Current research neglects the questions of how the depiction and destruction of such spaces might contribute to the appeal of action sequences (and indeed may even define them), and the extent to which these depictions and destructions exaggerate real-life experiences of contemporary spatiality or provide sought-for new experiences. If the production and limits of the body have been extensively theorised, then the spaces from which the 'restrictive limits' and borders of 'exclusion and belonging' are constructed, the environment through which the 'self-directed movement' takes place, is also a subject pertinent for enquiry.

Fred Pfeil, focussing on late 1980s and early 1990s action cinema, sees the spaces in which the protagonist moves as vital to the construction of masculine identity. In his 'From Pillar to Postmodern: Race, Class, and Gender in the Male Rampage Film' the writer sees the action heroes and their environments as expressions of new experiences of space and time. The heroes of the *Lethal Weapon* (1987–1998) and *Die Hard* (1988–ongoing) franchises have an uncanny ability 'to get *behind* the surfaces' of economic space ('the beltways of Dulles airport, the heating ducts of the Nakatomi tower', etc.), and Pfeil explicitly draws out representational correlates between space and body:

> These buildings/bodies, moreover, which literally in-corporate Fordist old and post-Fordist new, these sites or spaces both ruined and saved: do they not rhyme in turn, or even coincide, with the bodies of our oh-so-desirable heroes themselves, simultaneously displayed as beefcake and mortified as beef?[25]

This economic interpretation is directly linked with the spatial operations of the world system. Pfeil speaks of the

> ongoing shift within the world capitalist system away from territoriality and the power logic of the "space-of-places" toward a new form of global capitalism under the sole directorship, as it were, of a deterritorialized "space-of-flows" managed by transnational corporations.[26]

He argues that this shift has provoked a 'corresponding crisis in our collective definitions and representations of white straight masculinity'.[27]

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[25] Fred Pfeil, 'From Pillar to Postmodern: Race, Class, and Gender in the Male Rampage Film', in Jon Lewis (ed), *The New American Cinema* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 146–186 (p. 173, emphasis in original).
[26] Pfeil, 1998, p. 176.
[27] Pfeil, 1998, p. 176.

This shift is expressed not just in the representation of the (straight white male) protagonists, but also the spaces in which they have agency. Pfeil analyses the locations used in early 1990s action films and traces their decreasing specificity and displacement by transitory post-Fordist environments, seeing in the action narrative an allegorical expression of shifting global economics.[28] In Gallagher's view, such new economic systems undermine historically legitimised forms of masculine behaviour. As a response, the action film displaces 'present-day contradictions of male identity into visual space, into spectacle' as a way of dealing with the fact that masculine-coded assertive physical action no longer represents 'real solutions to the problems faced by members of capitalist societies'.[29] For Gallagher, action films 'offer scenarios of empowerment in which viewers' actual physical and social limitations become irrelevant',[30] scenarios which are exhibited in the reconfiguration of the landscape around the male action hero, who develops for themselves a space that is a 'grandiose emblem of masculinity and control', a site of displayed power that provides compensation for the loss of control felt by the subject of contemporary space.[31]

Vital to these compensatory processes is sensorial address. As Richard Dyer states in his piece on the subject, action films

> offer us thrills and elations we might seldom have, might think it impossible really to have, but they relate such imaginings of elation to the human co-ordinates of the real world: the environments we live in, the social categories in which we have our being.[32]

The visceral and sensorial pleasures of the form are grounded in bodily experience. Far from neutral, however, this '[e]xtreme sensation' of 'the body's contact with the world, its rush, its expansiveness, its physical stress and challenge' is coded as the experience of a straight white male, other identities denied 'quite the same access to the speed of worldly sensation'.[33] Many of the films examined in this thesis have straight white male

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[28] Pfeil, 1998, pp. 179–180.
[29] Gallagher, 2006, p. 45.
[30] Gallagher, 2006, p. 6.
[31] Gallagher, 2006, p. 60. On this gendered approach to space, see also Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 13–35. For her, male environmental experience is tied to agency, control and knowability – traits common to action heroes of either gender as they powerfully negotiate geographies and come to master spaces that are initially threatening.
[32] Richard Dyer, 'Action!', in Arroyo (ed), *Action/Spectacle Cinema*, pp. 17–21 (p. 18).
[33] Dyer, 2000, pp. 18–19.

protagonists, and it is doubtless that the genre remains inclined towards this cultural dominant. However, in their visual presentation, action sequences make these extreme sensations available to all in a manner that Dyer alludes to when he suggests that the viewer, whomever they are, is required to passively submit to the energetic activity presented by the films.[34]

Action films have the capacity to bring the production of space and its 'restrictive limits' to visibility, and achieve this primarily through their action sequences, a scene or series of linked scenes depicting attempts to accomplish time-sensitive goals in an environment of extreme stress. The action sequence is a consistent feature across action films: they are 'one of the defining elements of action cinema, displaying dramatic physical action with a dynamism and intensity that marks [them] out from other sequences'.[35] For Tasker, action sequences include

> elements such as chase sequences, combat of various kinds, a distinctive (typically fragmented) orchestration of space, an accelerated sense of time (a feeling of speed, of modernity perhaps) and pace (in editing or camerawork for instance), visual and aural spectacle and special effects.[36]

Many of these qualities will be dealt with in the following chapters. Certainly, it is in these sequences that the presence of restrictive limits, defined by the film in its presentation of both socio-cultural and material space, becomes most overt. The very existence of these limits is what marks out action sequences from their generic corollary – song-and-dance numbers in the musical genre. The latter, Dyer suggests, present 'head-on as it were, what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized', and in displaying scenarios of simplicity, abundance and speed musicals create utopian worlds in which the problems faced by viewers are already solved.[37] In this way the

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[34] Dyer, 2000, p. 21. On this point, note Gallagher's statement that action films, through their transformation of masculinity 'into spectacular abstractions and performative exhibitions', 'neutralize the threat that hegemonic masculinity poses for male viewers, who face social pressure to live up to the masculine ideal, and female viewers, who must live in its long shadow' (Gallagher, 2006, p. 66).

[35] Purse, 2011, p. 56. Geoff King notes the financial imperative for the inclusion of spectacular sequences within costly Hollywood blockbusters: 'the prevalence of spectacle and special effects has been boosted by a growing demand for products that can be further exploited in multimedia forms such as computer games and theme-park rides – secondary outlets which sometimes generate more profits than the films on which they are based. Spectacular display', he goes on, 'might also be driven by the increased importance of the overseas market in Hollywood's economic calculations, as it tends to translate more easily than other dimensions across cultural and language boundaries' (Geoff King, *Spectacular Narratives* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000), p. 2).

[36] Tasker, 2004, p. 7.

[37] Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', in Simon During (ed), *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 371–381 (p. 373).

musical sequence works through the contradictions that might arise in the real experiences of the audience and makes them disappear, a strategy which should not be understood as 'conspiratorial,' but rather as a 'line of least resistance'.[38] Correspondences with Gallagher's model of the action narrative are clear: both manifest utopian urges in images of surplus, bodily and environmental control, and managed difference.

Dyer's interpretation of the musical suggests that it relies on non-representational elements such as colour, rhythm and movement, rather than semiotic signs.[39] This model is taken up by Arroyo in the context of action cinema when he describes the pleasures of *Mission: Impossible* (1996) as the 'non-representational signs [of] colour, music, movement', the thrilling composition of these leaving the viewer 'too busy rushing through [the film's] aesthetics to think of anything but its erotics'.[40] Plot is secondary, subordinated to spectacle and sensation. Tasker suggests that for all the ideological negotiation being performed by action films, the 'specific qualities of action are, it seems, to do with pace, excitement, exhilaration: a visceral, even sensual, evocation of movement and violence'.[41] In this way both musical and action sequences are places where narrative meaning might be subordinated to visual display. Purse considers both the musical and the action sequence to use choreography, the 'presentation of physicality as spectacle' and 'expressive use of movement, gestures and postures' to generate an abstract yet embodied mode of address.[42] That is, the represented body grounds the viewer's experience in both cases, even though this body moves in extravagant ways. For Arroyo, action sequences may inform an audience of character and plot, but 'their function as spectacle exceeds their function as narrative' –

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[38] Dyer, 1999, p. 377. This interpretation of the song-and-dance number as utopian moment is adopted uncritically by writers following Dyer like Rick Altman. See Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 69. Additionally, Tom Gunning's brief mention above of the issue of the integration of spectacle into narrative also reveals the extent to which later debates concerning the musical genre can be understood as intensifications of conflicting models for cinematic practice – stand-alone spectacle(s) versus integrated narrative – and show that the musical functioned as ground upon which attempts at a coherent harmonisation of the two could be enacted. See Gunning, 'Early American Film', in John Hill & Pamela Church Gibson (ed), *American Cinema and Hollywood: Critical Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 29–45 (pp. 37–38).

[39] Dyer, 1999, p. 374.

[40] José Arroyo, 'Mission: Sublime', in Arroyo (ed), *Action/Spectacle Cinema* (2000c), pp. 21–25 (pp. 24–25).

[41] Tasker, 2004, p. 5.

[42] Lisa Purse, 'Gestures and Postures of Mastery: CGI and Contemporary Action Cinema's Expressive Tendencies', in Scott Balcerzak & Jason Sperb (ed), *Cinephilia in the Age of Digital Reproduction: Film, Pleasure and Digital Culture Vol. 1* (London: Wallflower, 2009), pp. 214–234 (p. 219).

something they hide through their appeal to real-world conditions and threats.[43] In musicals the spectacle displayed is that of achieved utopia, of excessive and performed fantasy; however, the importance of effort, manifested through dangerous and constraining environmental qualities that must be overcome using physical exertion and mental initiative, is particular to the action sequence. Space for the action protagonist is not to be danced on but to be struggled against, outwitted and survived.

Purse understands action sequences to 'operate developmentally across the action film', working to 'construct the hero's "becoming-powerful"' or their 'narrative of becoming' under which conditions they achieve 'full occupation of the heroic action body'.[44] In such sequences, 'the spectator vicariously experiences a spatialised mastery, [based on a] fantasy of expansive spatial penetration, of force, forward momentum and progress'.[45] The spectacle of this movement

> calls attention to the physiological attributes and corporeal attitudes of the body in action, *as well as* to the exhilarating, risk-infused environment which that body is moving through, the forces it is subjected to and the counter-forces that it directs outwards at that environment.[46]

The presentation of speed in action sequences, furthermore, can 'connect directly to our contemporary cultural context', providing the viewer with the sensation of moving through or beyond the strictures and regulations of urban living, 'of powering through or of rising above to transcend the quotidian'.[47] Or it can take these quotidian environments and make of them 'dynamic rather than static spaces in which the protagonist (and the implicated viewer) remains alert, mobile, and vulnerable'.[48] In either case, the action sequence is much more about resisting spatial and societal restrictions than it is about displays of mastery, something emphasised by the frequently fleeting and contingent quality of the action protagonist's victories: they do not so much 'win', as Gross points out, as they 'endure'.[49]

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[43] Arroyo, 2000c, p. 24.
[44] Purse, 2011, p. 33.
[45] Purse, 2011, p. 64.
[46] Purse, 2011, pp. 2–3, emphasis added.
[47] Purse, 2011, p. 64.
[48] Sue Harris, 'Conspiracy, Surveillance, and the Spatial Turn in the Bourne Trilogy', in Christoph Lindner (ed), *Globalization, Violence, and the Visual Culture of Cities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 161–171 (p. 162). These words reference the 1970s conspiracy thriller, but Harris perceptively links these ideas to the action film.
[49] Gross, 2000, p. 9.

As already noted, the action sequence is predicated on visual display, and the predominance and importance of these sequences in contemporary Hollywood blockbusters leads many writers to construct a dichotomy between narrative and spectacle. Tasker understands action cinema to be a particular mode of adventure cinema which accentuates moments of thrill and sensation found through extended action sequences, and she cites Tom Gunning's work on the similarity of action films to carnival rides and rollercoasters, a resemblance generated through the action sequence.[50] Geoff King asserts the importance of narrative structures in such films, stressing the requirement of story to enclose or defamiliarise spectacle so that it retains its kinetic impact.[51] The spaces of action sequences can therefore function as an element of spectacle in themselves or as representatives of the mundane, or the quotidian, upon which physicalised spectacle is performed.

Though the stage for spectacle, these spaces must also be legible. Following Dyer, they must 'situate the thrills' as much as the operations of storytelling do, providing context and being in some sense relatable.[52] The action sequence may often be predicated upon techno-military display as much as it is upon the 'exerting body', but this is frequently centred within recognisable configurations and landscapes, a fact that has important consequences for how such sequences relate their imaginings of elation to human co-ordinates.[53] On such relations, Eric Lichtenfeld notes that action sequences can engage familiar landscapes in 'fierce, unexpected ways',[54] and are at their most successful when locations are carefully delineated and invested in emotionally, because for him a sensation of 'jeopardy [is dependent] on the audience's understanding of spatial relationships'.[55]

Finally, Tasker notes that many action narratives 'carefully orchestrate social problems, representing inequalities that will be overcome in fantasy form'.[56] These words may reference social problems such as racial and gender inequalities, but they suggest further

[50] Tasker, 2004, p. 7. See also Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde', in Thomas Elsaesser (ed), *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative* (London: BFI, 1990), pp. 56–62.
[51] Geoff King, *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 178–223.
[52] Dyer, 2000, p. 18.
[53] Purse, 2011, p. 2; see also Dyer, 2000, p. 18.
[54] Eric Lichtenfeld, *Action Speaks Louder: Violence, Spectacle, and the American Action Movie*, 2nd edn (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2007), p. 163.
[55] Lichtenfeld, 2007, p. 186.
[56] Tasker, 1993, p. 72.

that action films operate at the intersection between lived experience and the fantastical overcoming of the restrictions inherent in that experience. The fantasy form in which these are overcome is the action sequence. As shown by Dyer and Purse these sequences appeal to the viewer's own bodily experience, and as shown by Pfeil and Gallagher this experience is just as much predicated on the importance of space and environment as it is upon the body. To fully examine this presentation of space, and to move beyond these initial engagements with questions of spatiality in action cinema, it is necessary to examine in detail contemporary space and how it is approached by critical theory.

The Spatial Turn

Questions of space are increasingly being raised in order to address contemporary cultural production and social issues. Rather than a pre-existing blank canvas, space is perceived to be influential, contingent and produced. In the 2009 words of Barney Warf and Santa Arias,

> Human geography over the last two decades has undergone a profound conceptual and methodological renaissance that has transformed it into one of the most dynamic, innovative and influential of the social sciences.[57]

No longer seen as a 'trivial, purely empirical field', geography has become an exporter of ideas, as other disciplines increasingly come 'to regard space as an important dimension to their own areas of inquiry'.[58] This insertion of spatial concerns and language into all humanities disciplines (and beyond) is often called the 'spatial turn', and has become in Edward S. Casey's words 'an entire arena of contemporary research and thought'.[59] The origin of this turn is more a wide-ranging cultural process than the result of identifiable individual projects, events or texts. It has arisen as a response to the compressions of spatial and temporal experience prompted by contemporary capitalism and technological advancements. Indebted to geography for much of its terminology, the turn is nonetheless both broader and deeper in scope than the application of cartographic knowledge to social theory.

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[57] Barney Warf & Santa Arias, 'The Reinsertion of Space into the Social Sciences and Humanities', in Barney Warf & Santa Arias (ed), *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1–10 (p. 1).
[58] Warf & Arias, 2009, p. 1.
[59] Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 2nd edn (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), p. xxi.

For Michel Foucault the spatial turn challenges the dominance of temporal frameworks and historicity in cultural theory and culture at large. Prior to the turn, to 'talk in terms of space' meant that 'one was hostile to time', and he corrects this false assumption by stressing that

> to trace the forms of implantation, delimitation and demarcation of objects, the modes of tabulation, the organization of domains mean[s] the throwing into relief of processes – historical ones, needless to say – of power. The spatializing decription [*sic*] of discursive realities gives on to the analysis of related effects of power.[60]

Hence, an analysis of space is an analysis of power – indeed, Foucault's words here suggest that any cultural critique which did not focus at least in part on space would be incomplete. Edward Soja proposes that the turn began in the 1980s with the 'calls for a far-reaching spatialization of the critical imagination' made by Foucault, Massey, Harvey and others, although much of the credit he gives to Henri Lefebvre, a prolific French Marxist philosopher who went further with the idea that space defines and controls social action – including class conflict – than previous writers.[61] Those like Soja who follow Lefebvre's lead aim to show the importance of space in the production of social life and capitalist systems, and often interrogate how new forms of space under capitalist globalisation might be inhabited. Their writing forms part of the increasing focus on issues of space in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

This corpus of work responds to what is frequently suggested was a previously dominant, and still highly influential, way of imagining space inherited from the Enlightenment. The latter, Harvey suggests, stressed the axiom that 'there was only one possible answer to any question', from which it followed that 'the world could be controlled and rationally ordered if we could only picture and represent it rightly'.[62] Fundamental principles were abstracted from lived experience, these laws being 'removed from embodiment and encapsulated into language, code, equations, *representations*, which were then taken to be the source [of meaning]'.[63] As a result,

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[60] Michel Foucault, 'Questions on Geography', Colin Gordon (trans.), in Jeremy W. Crampton & Stuart Elden (ed), *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 173–182 (p. 178).
[61] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London & New York: Verso, 1989), p. 11; see also pp. 41–42.
[62] Harvey, 1994, p. 27.
[63] Massey, 2005, p. 74, emphasis in original.

power becomes contained within and by what Foucault terms 'disciplinary mechanisms', scientific and mathematical advances establishing a society of normalisation whose regulation proceeded with and through the tools of exact geometry.[64] For many of these writers, these tools are geared to a greater or lesser extent towards economic accumulation, and they work to spread this 'cumulative process' across the entire world in a manner that requires – and is required by – a hierarchical and standardised spatial imagination.[65] Cartesian principles are accordingly integrated into the Enlightenment project and its concurrent standardisation of global space and experience, utter objectivity becoming a highly valued representational attribute, thereby running the danger of 'confining the free flow of human experience and practice to rationalized configurations'.[66] The power of space is established as its ability to represent, its ability to *show*, this drive 'to transform action into legibility' causing a more tactile and hands-on way of being in the world to be marginalised or forgotten.[67] The formalisation of geography as a science was vital to this conceptualisation of the world as a discoverable, mappable potential resource. Maps 'enframed' the world, and in their appeal to rational, abstract models they increasingly became separate from that which they represented,[68] developing a dialectic of space which on the one hand depicts the local, the lived, the real, and on the other the global, the schematic, the mapped.

Contemporary developments in technology are seen to further this two-fold experience of space, with the latter, abstract visualisation continuing to intensify in cultural importance following the industrial revolution. In his account of the beginning of railway travel in the late nineteenth century, Wolfgang Schivelbusch indicates how this new technology generated perceptual transformations, industrialising time and space by providing new experiences of both, to which the individual adapted. Unlike previous methods of transportation, the railway was 'abstract and disorientating'[69] in its realisation of Newtonian mathematics and its removal of the individual from the immediate environment through which they travelled, which they instead now perceived

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[64] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan (trans.) (London: Penguin, 1991).
[65] Henri Lefebvre, 'The State and Society', Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner & Stuart Elden (trans.), in Neil Brenner & Stuart Elden (ed), *State, Space, World: Selected Essays* (London & Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009a), pp. 51–68 (p. 56).
[66] Harvey, 1994, p. 253.
[67] De Certeau, 1988, p. 97.
[68] Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1994), pp. 34–37.
[69] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Leamington Spa, Hamburg & New York: Berg Publishers, 1986), p. 37.

'*through* the apparatus' in which they were positioned.[70] Technology in such an account enframes and mediates the world just as much as maps do. Developments in the twentieth century such as air travel and air transport, containerisation, telecommunications and a highly interconnected global economy continue to annihilate space through further processes of time-space compression.[71] As the regularisation of Fordism becomes the flexible accumulation of post-Fordism in the mid-twentieth century spatial barriers themselves diminish, and though for Harvey this makes us 'much more sensitized to what the world's spaces contain', these spaces are increasingly dependent upon commodity production, 'a wide range of seemingly contingent geographical circumstances' being reconstituted 'as structured internal elements' of global capitalism.[72] The world becomes smaller thanks to the inherent drive of capitalism to reduce turnover time and access a wide array of markets; it also becomes more standardised, capitalism being an economic system which works to advance scientific knowledge in the pursuit of increased economic exchange, the rational ordering and subdivision of space a consequence of this economic streamlining.[73] According to this avowedly Marxist interpretation, the Euclidean ordering of space (the reduction of space to a container of key points upon an inherently featureless infinite grid) is at base a capitalistic goal, a way of parcelling space for the purpose of efficient labour activity, as well as making space itself a product and part of the market economy in its status as a commodity.[74] Recent developments in satellite technology, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and digital imaging continue to further an 'ideology of abstraction and detachment', these being something of the apotheosis of the enframing of the world Gregory describes, the 'power to display complex data-sets in three dimensions, to rotate, manipulate, and track across their terrains, and to collapse continental and even global landscapes onto video screens' an extension of earlier colonial processes.[75]

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[70] Schivelbusch, 1986, p. 64, emphasis in original.
[71] See Harvey, 1994, p. 156, p. 240.
[72] Harvey, 1994, p. 294.
[73] Harvey, 1994, pp. 306–307. On this subject, see also Neil Smith, *Uneven Development Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 93.
[74] Harvey, 1994, pp. 245–249. See Andro Linklater's *Measuring America* for an account of the rising importance of mapping in relation to property ownership, the commodification of the landscape, and the establishment of centralised state control in the early years of the United States. Linklater, *Measuring America* (London: Harper Collins, 2003).
[75] Gregory, 1994, p. 65.

The impact of such technological and scientific developments upon the mental apparatus of the subjects experiencing them cannot be underestimated. What Gregory terms 'neoclassical economics and its extensions into human geography' have themselves, for him, '*coloniz[ed]* the lifeworld' of contemporary Western culture, leading to an increasing commodification of social life and a 'hyper-rationalization' of experience.[76] Lefebvre in particular calls attention to this phenomenon and asserts that it is in space that the consequences of the colonisation of the lifeworld by abstraction and commodification are revealed and battles against its hegemony staged. While space may declare its universality and rationality, in Lefebvre's eyes such space (and its mental corollary, hyper-rationalised experience) is a 'product of violence and war', a 'political' and 'institutional' way of conceiving the world which 'serves those forces which make a *tabula rasa* of whatever stands in their way, of whatever threatens them'.[77] Space has therefore become the province of capitalism and is produced under its dictates on a global scale, the effect of which is to turn it into a concrete abstraction in a manner that makes it as easy to exchange as any other commodity.[78] Space produced in this way 'impregnates people, socializes everybody as spatial bodies and class subjects', its reliance upon and instalment of consensus allowing it 'to flourish as all there is to be perceived'.[79]

Lefebvre's groundbreaking account of the use of space within state and capitalist systems generated (with the assistance of developing poststructuralist theory) an interest in seeking out different forms of spatiality.[80] Theoretical work, rather than existing in the aspatial realm of absolute knowledge sought by Enlightenment values, becomes situated and localised. This is related to the question of how contemporary space can actually be lived in: as Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert state, the question of

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[76] Gregory, 1994, p. 62, emphasis in original. Gregory follows Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol. II, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, Thomas McCarthy (trans.) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), pp. 183–185, pp. 303–403.

[77] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 285, emphasis in original.

[78] Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 340–341.

[79] Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 112–113.

[80] Many see Lefebvre as being a, if not the, essential writer within the spatial turn, Casey describing *The Production of Space* as generating a 'revolution in social sciences', especially when translated into English. See Casey, 2009, p. 369 (f/n 5). Andy Merrifield asserts that the publication of this translation in 1991 'was *the* event within critical human geography during the 1990s, sparking a thorough reevaluation of social and spatial theory, just when apologists for a globalizing neoliberalism proclaimed "the end of geography"' (Merrifield, 2006, p. 103, emphasis in original).

habitability 'dominates the second half of the twentieth century as the key analytic issue concerning space':

> At stake is the practical problem of what it takes to make space habitable, to make places from sites where the active place-making infrastructure (tradition, memory, habit, and so forth) ha[s] been either destroyed or displaced.[81]

Writers like Lefebvre, Edward Soja, Marc Augé, Fredric Jameson and even Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari suggest to varying degrees and in variable ways that the contemporary subject 'no longer recognises the space in which it is located. The earlier model of recognition has become derisory and clearly inadequate'.[82] Some of these writers offer what they see as more adequate, or more sought for, spatial imaginations, and the constituents of these imaginations, as well as their viability and their potential impetus towards radicalism or the politics of emancipation, vary greatly (as do their connections to Marxist theory), but they all manifest something of a desire to return understandings of space to the subjective, rather than objective, realm.

In allowing social and mental life to be dominated by disembodied spatial constructs, Western culture has for Lefebvre disregarded the importance of space in all human experience. Space restricts activities and commands bodies, and therefore it is necessary to pay attention to how it is produced.[83] Under what conditions, dictates, assumptions, restrictions and goals does the production of space take place? An analysis of these is an ongoing process, not a historical project, space being 'at once a precondition and a result of social superstructures' – it is both a product and a means of production, influenced by and an influence upon all social action.[84] Far from fixed, undialectical and immobile, space is alive and in constant flux: 'space has a pulse, and it palpitates, flows, and collides with other spaces'.[85] Appreciation of these flows, of the un-fixity of space, is resolutely necessary for any social inquiry or agenda, something Massey also stresses throughout her work.[86] Soja, working within this tradition, calls his own approach the 'reassertion of a critical spatial perspective in contemporary social theory and analysis',

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[81] Ian Buchanan & Gregg Lambert, 'Introduction: Deleuze and Space', in Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert (ed) *Deleuze and Space* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 1–15 (p. 2).
[82] Buchanan & Lambert, 2005, p. 6.
[83] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 143.
[84] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 85.
[85] Merrifield, 2006, p. 105.
[86] Massey, 2005, p. 5, p. 107.

space being given its due after having been forcibly silenced by the 'temporal prisonhouse' of a formerly monolithic historically-oriented conceptual framework.[87]

Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* is an influential attempt to map cultural production within this context. It is understood by some to enact a 'spatialization of Marxism, and concurrent Marxification of space', stressing as it does individual experience of space and the challenges presented to this experience by the supremacy of the abstract spatiality of capitalist production.[88] Lefebvre's consideration that each mode of production produces space in a certain way is a stated influence, but Jameson suggests that the contemporary period contains a 'supplement of spatiality' over and above preceding periods.[89] For him, the domination of 'space and spatial logic' in contemporary life robs the individual of the capacity to organise 'past and future into coherent experience',[90] and deprives us of the ability to historically contextualise a system in which '"culture" has become a product in its own right [...and] the market has become a substitute for itself and fully as much a commodity as any of the items it includes within itself'.[91] In a world space consisting of commodities and recycled historical forms, revolutionary and utopian thinking become increasingly hard to conceptualise, thanks in part to the restrictions capital production have placed upon spatial agency. (Like Soja and Harvey, Jameson favours the term postmodern to describe the traces of this process, although he has written specifically about globalisation.[92] While the two terms are far from identical, they are interrelated: the changes to modernity that are identified under the banner postmodernity often compel, require and manifest that global connectivity that is called globalisation. This connectivity itself is seen to lead to many of the psychological traits associated with the postmodern condition, and so forth. Both are intensely concerned with both material space and spatial imaginations, and while postmodernism and postmodernity retain currency within the critical realm, work describing them that is used in this thesis will

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[87] Soja, 1989, p. 1.
[88] Warf & Arias, 2009, p. 3. Soja suggests that Jameson 'derives much of his conceptualization of space from the *Raumgeist* of Lefebvre, whom he helped to reach a larger American audience in the early 1980s'. See Soja, 1989, p. 62, emphasis in original. Soja, Lefebvre and Jameson were all in close communication, and together went on a tour of Los Angeles in the early 1980s. See Merrifield, 2006, pp. 73–74.
[89] Jameson, 1991, p. 365.
[90] Jameson, 1991, p. 25.
[91] Jameson, 1991, p. x.
[92] See Fredric Jameson, 'Globalization and Political Strategy', *New Left Review* 4 (July-August 2000), pp. 49–68.

be approached through ideas regarding globalisation, as it is here that the debates regarding space, place and interconnectivity can be most fruitfully explored).

This prominence of the spatial that Jameson and others identify in postmodernity, and the overwhelming awareness of space on a global scale described in accounts of globalisation, do not lead to a more successfully oriented subject, but rather to the subject's rootless immersion in a worldwide system they cannot understand. As Jameson says of this new space, '[w]e are submerged in its henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point where our now postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and practically (let alone theoretically) incapable of distantiation'.[93] For all the data we are today provided – be it global (through advances in communication and transportation), cultural (through various proliferating media), or even spatial (in computerised cartographic systems) – Jameson suggests that we are actually less secure of our spatial position than ever before.

Globalisation, mobilised by capitalism in its inherent expansion into new markets, brings a variety of spatial experiences and realities into direct contact in a way not previously possible. One consequence of this is an awareness of difference, the interaction of global cultures making 'questions of locality, sense of place and of identity in place matter now more than ever'.[94] An awareness of local realities represents something of a 'constructive response to the forces of globalization in communicational, technological, economic, climatological, and migratory contexts'.[95] A contradictory yet linked consequence is the homogenisation of culture, globalisation seen by some as a 'dull, ambling leviathan that tramples cultural distinctiveness at every turn', destroying nuance and identity.[96] Ulrich Beck, in his book *What is Globalization?*, explicitly rejects this view of a '*single commodity-world* where local cultures and identities are uprooted and replaced with symbols from the publicity and image departments of multinational corporations'.[97] The McDonaldization thesis[98] is for Beck and others too simple a way of conceiving the results and motivations of

[93] Jameson, 1991, pp. 48–49.
[94] Charles Withers, 'Place and the "Spatial Turn" in Geography and in History', *Journal of the History of Ideas* (October 2009), pp. 637–658 (p. 638).
[95] Casey, 2009, p. xxxv.
[96] Jerry A. Varsava, 'Review of *Creative Destruction: How Globalization is Changing the World's Cultures* by Tyler Cowen', *Symploke* 11 (2003), pp. 255–257 (p. 255).
[97] Ulrich Beck, *What is Globalization?*, Patrick Camiller (trans.) (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), p. 43, emphasis in original.
[98] See George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (London: Pine Forge Press, 2004).

globalisation, and ignores the existence of uneven development among other things. Massey, for instance, uses the intermingling of cultural and spatial experiences she identifies as the result of globalisation to think about space as a contingent and constant crossing of trajectories, a non-teleological process of multiplicity, rather than as an objective and homogenous container of economic processes.[99]

Time-space compression and globalisation can also bring about restored interest in personal experience and its highly subjective differences. As philosopher Edward S. Casey suggests,

> Valorization of local differences arises in the very face of global capitalism and global communication networks: partly as resistance to them but still more so from a renewed appreciation of the felt familiarity of the places one inhabits with one's lived body.[100]

Building on the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Casey and many other recent theorists explore our lived experience of particular, subjective space, and this aspect of the spatial turn is positioned as an explicit resistance against global homogeneity, McDonaldization and the anonymous landscapes of capital flow.[101] Environment is 'felt bodily first of all', and this focus on human sensation generates understandings of space that are multivalent, unrepeatable and invested with emotion.[102] This is frequently termed 'place', as a counterpoint to homogenous and isotropic 'space'. To make a place of somewhere is to experience it bodily and subjectively. As Casey indicates above, paying attention to the particulars of lived experience in this way can combat the unimaginable extent and variety of accessible global space.

While capital flow and the creation of increasingly frictionless environments assert that spaces are interchangeable, writers like Casey and Massey propose that – on the contrary – our lived experience differentiates spaces in ways that might be difficult to account for but are nonetheless important.[103] This kind of attention also reaffirms the value of the lived body and embodied, subjective experience in an increasingly technologised environment and in the presence of the seemingly non-bodied and non-

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[99] Massey, 2005, pp. 83–89.
[100] Casey, 2009, p. xxiii.
[101] Particularly well used is *Phenomenology of Perception*. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Colin Smith (trans.) (London: Routledge, 1989).
[102] Casey, 2009, p. 313.
[103] Casey, 2009, pp. 28–29; Massey, 2005, pp. 83–89.

spatial domain of cyberspace. For Lefebvre, lived connection to space is vital, and approaching it as a *texture* to be lived rather than a *text* to be read will require nothing less than 'the abolition of Western metaphysics' and the overturning of a tradition of thought that has indoctrinated society to this disembodied and objectified spatial imagination.[104] As he notes, 'long before the analysing, separating intellect, long before formal knowledge, there was an intelligence of the body', and for him this bodily intelligence needs once again to be foregrounded in spatial perception.[105] Space is not an empty site for the staging of events, but a fundamental aspect of them: as Casey states, the immediate environment 'serves as the *condition* of all existing things', and 'far from being merely locatory or situational, place belongs to the very concept of existence'.[106] The spatialisation of consciousness concerns just as much the end of our fingertips as it does the other side of the world.

Notes on Methodology

This thesis will argue that the operations, anxieties and possibilities inherent in contemporary space are explored by cinematic action sequences, sequences which do not just represent space and spatial imaginations but also function as sites of investigation into the lived environment and our activities within it. While writers like Pfeil, Gallagher and Purse may be conscious of the extent to which the environments of action sequences signify shifting cultural and economic conditions, a sustained analysis of this process of signification has yet to be undertaken. The present work will set out not only to prove that the action genre is a locus for the representation and working through of spatial anxieties, but also to account for why this is so. In being so focused this thesis will be less concerned with national ideological content or gender performativity than these previous studies of the action cinema have been, although these issues will be taken into account when necessary.[107]

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[104] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 407; see also p. 222.
[105] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 174.
[106] Casey, 2009, p. 15, emphasis in original.
[107] For instance it is certainly true, as Dyer stresses, that '[e]xperience of space has race and gender dimensions which set limits to how plausible or exceptional one may find a representation' (Dyer, 2000, p. 20). But it should also be noted that action films seek the broadest possible audience, and furthermore that their 'use of visual excess in place of logical resolution', as Gallagher terms it, resists messages of 'social repression [...and] problematizes the genre's distinct associations with masculinist ideologies' (Gallagher, 2006, pp. 63–64).

Concentrated attention will be paid to the filmic construction of space through and within action sequences, and to this end critical literature associated with the spatial turn and approaches to spatiality in contemporary culture will be utilised, as well as several influential commentaries on these texts. In this way a methodological framework for analysing the portrayal of environments depicted in action sequences will be developed, analysing a) the content of the space presented; b) the way it is cinematically constructed and represented (through camera angles, editing, special effects and so forth); and c) the way the body of the onscreen protagonist interacts with and responds to this space. Furthermore, phenomenological theories of film will assist in speculations regarding the positioning of the viewer in relation to this onscreen body, although these theories will be applied most extensively in the conclusion to the thesis.

In their depiction of and engagement with space, action sequences do not merely reproduce spatial imaginations but are in some way constitutive of them. As with other Hollywood genres, action films work through twinned logics of predictability and novelty, supplying a wide audience with broadly aimed stories, but differentiating themselves through innovation. The particularities of these innovations, from the mode of spectacle to the digital effects and the architecture in which action is staged, reveal contemporary spatial imaginations, appealing to audiences by reflecting known, lived experience in a spectacular manner. Further to this, action sequences can be seen to train or acclimatise the spectator to new experiences of space generated by late capitalism and its technological advances. As Harvey notes, '[s]ymbolic orderings of space and time provide a framework for experience through which we learn who or what we are in society'.[108] The contemporary action sequence provides audiences with a symbolic ordering of space and a mode of appropriating it which, however divorced from real experience, can nonetheless be related bodily to the sensations of the viewer through the onscreen presence of the action protagonist. Scott Bukatman suggests that the rise of superhero narratives in the early twentieth century were a response to the fact that the 'human body is not designed for the stresses of mechanical operation'[109] and he cites one of Schivelbusch's nineteenth century sources who describes the peculiar shock produced by railway accidents as a result of their coming 'upon the sufferers instantaneously without warning [...] the utter helplessness of a human being in the

[108] Harvey, 1994, p. 214.
[109] Scott Bukatman, *Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Supermen in the 20th Century* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 53.

midst of the great masses in motion render[ing] these accidents peculiarly terrible'.[110] In their staging of spatial destruction, action sequences assert the possibility of the human body to endure, impact upon, change and demolish contemporary space, and to survive intact. In this way their spatial interactions and appropriations, though occasionally anarchic, assuage fears regarding the unliveability of the built environment and the potential insignificance of the human figure within it.

While there are certain determined requirements to such sequences, the precise presentational strategies are variable. The current work is not a historical study, and will not provide a chronicle of how the techniques employed to engage audiences have shifted over time. Nonetheless, this study is reliant upon previous work in these areas, and it will be accepted that subsequent to the early 1990s action sequences are generally edited at an increasingly hectic tempo, are more often dominated by or dependent upon digital special effects, and are progressively fundamental to the workings of Hollywood cinema.[111] In addition to the definition provided by Tasker above, action sequences will here be considered as short, sustained episodes (roughly between three and fifteen minutes) of intense activity involving the time-sensitive completion of a goal (be it simple or complex) under extreme pressure. Such sequences can utilise either a single location and a single narrative goal, or alternatively several locations and goals all tied together in a manner that demonstrates a unity of purpose and form. Wider narrative and contextual detail and interpretation will be marginalised in the following examinations but, when necessary, addressed in a manner tied to the sequence in question. In line with the all-pervasiveness of action cinema as a 'mode' in contemporary Hollywood filmmaking, these sequences will be taken from films that could be described as varying generically, but which all contain a focus on action and a privileging of action sequences as sites of spectacle, struggle and achievement.

The choice of critical literature in the thesis has been dictated by both the quality and the influence of the primary texts in question, many of which are totemic reference

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[110] John Eric Erichsen, *On Concussion of the Spine, Nervous Shock, and Other Obscure Injuries of the Nervous System, in Their Medical and Medico-Legal Aspects* (London: Spottiswoode & Co., 1875), p. 196; quoted in Schivelbusch, 1986, p. 143.

[111] In these assumptions this thesis follows Geoff King's work in *Spectacular Narratives*, Michele Pierson's work in 'CGI Effects in Hollywood Science Fiction Cinema 1989-95', and the previously cited work of Tasker, Jeffords and Arroyo respectively. See King, 2000, pp. 94–102; Michele Pierson, 'CGI Effects in Hollywood Science Fiction Cinema 1989-95', *Screen* 40:2 (Summer 1999), pp. 158–176 (pp. 158–159); and, for instance, Arroyo, 2000b, p. viii.

points in discussions of space and cultural attitudes towards it. Particularly, it is often remarked that Lefebvre's work is increasingly being recognised as full of insights that remain, twenty years after his death in 1991, significant to cultural studies.[112] Andrew Merrifield describes *The Production of Space* as having been 'appropriated' by 'geographers, urbanists and cultural theorists' in the English-speaking academy, raising awareness of Lefebvre's writing even as much of it (he wrote more than sixty books and many more articles) remains un-translated from the French.[113] Lefebvre is nonetheless little-used within film studies, and this thesis will aim to show that this need not be the case, *The Production of Space* in particular including within it assessments on spatial representation, and the reading and interpretation of space, that are highly pertinent to film studies, especially when considering recent appreciations of the explorations of urban space within cinema.[114]

While Lefebvre's work is undergoing an extended renaissance, other writers used by this thesis, such as de Certeau and Jameson, may be seen as thoroughly appraised by cultural studies, their writing, particularly that from the 1980s which is here employed, unable to offer cutting edge observations on contemporary issues. The following chapters will prove that this is not the case: de Certeau's tactics and strategies dichotomy and his theories of everyday life contain observations crucial to an understanding of action cinema, and Jameson's theories of spatialisation and the perceptual modifications it entails are essential in diagnosing continuing cultural conditions. By reading such prominent texts in tandem with more contemporary commentaries upon culture, geography and globalisation, as well as engaging extensively with work within film studies upon both cinematic space and the action genre, this thesis will show that the use of these intersecting bodies of theory is both fruitful and necessary.

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[112] See for example Neil Brenner & Stuart Elden, 'Introduction: Lefebvre and the Survival of Capitalism', in Brenner & Elden (eds) *State, Space, World* (2009a), pp. 1–48 (p. 1).

[113] Merrifield, 2006, p. xxxii. Lefebvre's conclusions, as well as his subjects and style of inquiry change subtly though his long career, and as such – and because of its particular relevance – *The Production of Space* will be utilised for the most part, with occasional diversions into his other work when necessary.

[114] Of these urban explorations, see for instance Barbara Mennel, *Cities and Cinema* (London & New York: Routledge, 2008); and the following edited collections: David B. Clarke, *The Cinematic City* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997); François Penz & Maureen Thomas, *Cinema and Architecture: Méliès, Mallet-Stevens, Multimedia* (London: BFI, 1997); Mark Shiel & Tony Fitzmaurice, *Cinema and City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); and Linda Krause & Patrice Petro, *Global Cities: Cinema, Architecture, and Urbanism in a Digital Age* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

Chapter Outline

In the first chapter of this thesis the interdependence of action sequences and their settings, and the importance of spatial appropriation to such sequences, will be demonstrated through an analysis of three films that stage their action within iconic or recognisable sites. Action sequences from *True Lies* (1994), *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* (2011) and *The International* (2009) will be shown to inhabit architecture in a way that is synergistic and mutually reinforcing, responding to the particular spatiality of each respective setting. Indicating the extent to which architectural differentiation is an essential aspect of large-scale action sequences, the chapter will explore how iconic sites featured in action films can provide brand identity in the mainstream marketplace and, more importantly, how action sequences reflect the peculiarities of the spaces in which they are set through the acts of representing them onscreen and depicting the movement of exerting bodies within them. The writing of Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* will be introduced to indicate how these sequences function as spectacular demonstrations of pedestrian 'tactics', appropriating space in brief and fleeting ways for the purposes of personal expression and survival in a battle against the dominating spatial ordering of the 'strategies' of the state. These appropriations, as this chapter will show, are highly place-specific for de Certeau, and the thesis will continue from this point to expand upon the concept of spatial appropriation in the action sequence and the ways in which it is represented.

The work of Henri Lefebvre will be fundamental to Chapter 2, which will function in tandem with Chapter 3 to produce a comprehensive account of the terms 'space' and 'place' in critical theory respectively, and how action sequences can work to evoke one or the other through their spatial appropriations. For Lefebvre, writing in *The Production of Space*, contemporary space is dominated by what he terms 'abstract space', an isometric and homogenous spatiality in which '[e]verything is alike', and differentiation only takes place through markers 'added after the fact' in the manner of decorations or signs.[115] Such frictionless spaces of capitalist infrastructure are described by Marc Augé as 'non-places', being environments not 'defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity', but rather zones whose blankness and

[115] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 200.

reproducibility are designed to allow people and goods to flow without hindrance.[116] A consequence of the rise of these spaces is a global landscape of homogenous sites, themselves forming a panoptic network that keeps the individual subject under tight spatial control. This is 'space' in many critical accounts (as opposed to 'place'), and it is the environment depicted by the franchise featuring Jason Bourne: *The Bourne Identity* (2002), *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004) and *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007). This spy trilogy presents a homogenised global environment of capitalist infrastructure, cities and continents generally indistinguishable from one another. The action sequences of the three similar films show Bourne responding to this abstract space, resorting to analogous strategies of spatial abstraction in his efforts to survive, latent violence and ever-present anxiety depicted as corollaries of a globalised world. The action film *Jumper* (2008) will similarly be shown to depict a similarly homogenised worldwide environment of empty sites, the film's evocation of tourist pleasures generating not place-investment but a scopic regime of restless consumer activity.

Chapter 3 will demonstrate that action sequences push against the standardisation of space identified above, as they can valorise both localities themselves and personal involvement within them. While *Casino Royale* (2006) will be shown to represent space as open to interpretation and embodied improvisational action, its franchise follow-up, *Quantum of Solace* (2008), will be understood to assert the particularities of place in its action sequences in a manner that joins up with the film's wider themes of global inequality. Rather than a homogenised mass of space, the various cities and locations in *Quantum of Solace* are presented as a polyvalent collection of 'places,' these localities nonetheless influenced by, and in turn influencing, the global system. Furthermore, in its final action set-piece in a hotel in the Bolivian desert *Quantum of Solace* demonstrates the possibility for a site lacking in meaning and memory to become a place of emotional content and lived experience, a process that occurs in part through bodily knowledge and assertive spatial interaction. By energising a previously inert environment through explosive conflagration, this sequence reveals hidden structures of power and acknowledges that space is a 'product of interrelations'.[117] While the film may be unusual in its focus upon global politics, its action sequences are nonetheless

[116] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, John Howe (trans.) (London: Verso, 1995), pp. 77–78.
[117] Massey, 2005, p. 9.

typical of the form in their attention to the particular qualities and materiality of the environments in which they are staged and their tendency to make places out of spaces.

Having established the way in which action sequences not only respond to environmental particulars in their representation of appropriations of space but also manifest spatial imaginations that can be closely tied to critical theory, the thesis will then examine sequences in a manner that acknowledges wider generic procedures. The inherent inclination in the action sequence towards an empowered representation of bodily-spatial interaction can be revealed and complicated in the films through the establishment of separate, exceptional spaces in which action is staged. The bracketing out of these spaces for action, understood through recourse to work on the paraspace motif by Scott Bukatman and Brian McHale, will be the focus of Chapter 4. Sites where 'conflicts of the normal world are played through and resolved', paraspaces are therefore fundamental to the action genre, which often displaces contemporary cultural concerns into spaces of fantasy and grandiose spectacle.[118] This chapter will indicate how *Last Action Hero* (1993), *Sucker Punch* (2011) and *Inception* (2010) offer metonymic presentations of the operations of action films themselves, explicitly creating environments that are zones of escape and empowerment. However, these zones are inevitably colonised by the commodity-based logic of abstract space. This potentially contradicts their messages of spatial liberation. While *Last Action Hero* firmly establishes the inherently spatial operations of a cinema of spectacular fantasy, *Sucker Punch*'s bricolage of cultural signs evinces the 'homogenously modernized condition'[119] of a contemporary cultural style that, in Fredric Jameson's formulation, 'ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of preexistent texts'.[120] *Sucker Punch* shows the dissociative consequences of this style, escapist fantasy being a mark of consumerist surrender. *Inception* operates in a similar manner, but in its depiction of characters that exhibit the trappings of a wealthy corporate caste, the film's action sequences indicate how the abstraction of space and the manipulation of both urban and psychological environments support the objectives of commodity capitalism and those most securely placed within such a system.

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[118] Scott Bukatman, 'Amidst These Fields of Data: Allegory, Rhetoric, and the Paraspace', *Critique* 33.3 (Spring 1992), pp. 119–219 (p. 203).
[119] Jameson, 1991, p. 310.
[120] Jameson, 1991, p. 96.

The pervasive effect of abstract space will be further established in Chapter 5, which examines the creation of spaces using digital special effects. Such effects involve the plotting of extensive coordinates using computer software and the rendering, through this, of a representation of space. As such, they work to remove chance and contingency from the cinematic image. In this they echo abstract space, itself a 'materialized, mechanized and technicized' 'simulacrum of a full space'.[121] This chapter will show that action sequences that create spaces through digital effects can do so in a totalising manner that extends regimes of visual control deeply embedded in cultural consciousness. The use of digital compositing at key moments of action in *The Matrix* (1999) and *Swordfish* (2001) illustrates the capacity for computerised special effects to provide a comprehensive visualisation of space, while *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003) furthers this process and replaces the profilmic body with a digital one, a strategy that echoes the status of the body in abstract space. This not only has consequences for the phenomenological connection felt by a viewer of these sequences, but also for the status and treatment of the body in late capitalism. The potentially alienating environment of cyberspace will then be shown to be embodied in the action sequences of *TRON: Legacy*, a film which, through presenting cyberspace as an environment of kinetic play, repossess the abstract space of 'blank sheets of paper, drawing-boards, plans, sections, elevations, scale models, [and] geometrical projections' as a place for exuberance and embodied action.[122]

Chapter 6 will examine the use of 3-D and how it might alter the style of action sequences and therefore the manner in which space is produced and depicted by them. Critical literature on 3-D will be utilised to explore whether stereoscopic film has a fundamentally different 'grammar' than planar cinema, and how it might construct space in a different way.[123] This will then be further examined using the Resident Evil franchise (2002–ongoing) as a case study. While *Resident Evil* (2002) is not a stereoscopic film, later franchise instalment *Resident Evil: Afterlife* (2010) is, and both share director Paul W. S. Anderson. By comparing action sequences from these two films, and using David Bordwell's work on film style and intensified continuity, this chapter will indicate that the 3-D format functions as an augmentation of existing

[121] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 313.
[122] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 200.
[123] Philip Sandifer, 'Out of the Screen and into the Theater: 3-D Film as Demo', *Cinema Journal* 50.3 (Spring 2011), pp. 62–78 (p. 78).

strategies of spatial production and representation, rather than providing a wholly new or divergent aesthetic. Then, by engaging with the additional depth cues the format provides, the action film *Dredd 3D* (2012) will be shown to extend understanding of the space in which the action protagonist moves. By showing urban structures stretching away toward the horizon, the film indicates the scale of the space to be negotiated, while the use of emergence not only hems the action protagonists in and restricts them but also develops these themes of spatial control.

Finally, a concluding chapter will summarise the various ways in which space is investigated by action sequences, before proceeding to more fully examine what may be the purpose or reason behind these representations of spatial negotiation. While they express anxieties regarding contemporary built space, this chapter will stress that action sequences also mobilise a form of viewer attention that is embodied and physical. Action sequences take the form that they do in order to solicit this bodily attention, which fleshes out the spatial experiences they present. In order to demonstrate this, it will be necessary to indicate how Lefebvre's and de Certeau's respective suspicions and reservations regarding visual perception are destabilised through the explicitly body-centred experiences that form the focus of action sequences.

Chapter 1: Iconic Space

Martin Flanagan suggests that action films, which for him consist of a 'set of aesthetic formulae linked to ruthlessly efficient business practices',[1] engage with space in a manner in which 'abstraction is the dominant tone'.[2] While city-specific locations might be featured for 'geographical credibility', the function of space is 'purely structural' and 'essentially *always the same*' from film to film, a site of 'cinematic spectacle rather than quotidian existence' or a collection of 'non-specific backdrops constructed according to the purely physical requirements of the action'.[3] In his model, these films treat both space and time as abstract and non-determinant, their presence providing little more than necessary context for action. To conclude in this way that action films typically disregard geographical specificity neglects their focus upon the particularities of the spaces in which spectacle is staged, as well as the importance of recognisable and iconic sites in the production and marketing of such films. The use of these sites is, on one level, an example of the 'ruthlessly efficient business practices' Flanagan identifies, but perhaps more importantly iconic locations provide suitable environments for the demonstrative employment of tactical appropriations of space, appropriations which fleetingly and spectacularly manipulate the material environment. These buildings also, through their highly distinctive spatialities, work to invoke the maxim of the spatial turn that '"space matters," not for the trivial and self-evident reason that everything occurs in space, but because *where* events unfold is integral to *how* they take shape'.[4] In the action sequence the action protagonist becomes bodily active; as a consequence of this the limits to that bodily activity are indicated, those limits being spatial: walls, doors, levels, objects, and so forth. The threats and subsequent adrenaline rush presented by action sequences makes both the action protagonist and the viewer highly aware of these limits, spatial perception changing accordingly.

In this chapter this use of iconic architectural structures in action sequences will be analysed. This will function as the starting point for a discussion of the spatial focus of such sequences and how they depend upon depictions of spatial acclimatisation, appropriation and manipulation. The buildings featured can form a distinctive part of

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[1] Flanagan, Martin, '"Get Ready for Rush Hour": The Chronotope in Action', in Tasker (ed), *Action and Adventure Cinema*, pp. 103–118 (p. 103).
[2] Flanagan, 2004, p. 110.
[3] Flanagan, 2004, p. 110, emphasis in original.
[4] Warf & Arias, 2009, p. 10, emphasis in original

the appeal of the sequences and also the films that contain them. The nature of this appeal is multi-faceted and little-explored: for example, the Burj Khalifa Dubai in *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* (2011) and the Guggenheim Museum New York in *The International* (2009) function as crucial attractions, their presence marketed and displayed in a manner that overshadows many of the other properties of the films. Far from the 'non-specific backdrops' Flanagan identifies, these buildings are depicted as environments containing distinct spatial qualities – monumental spaces worthy of sustained attention both during but also prior to the action sequences that take place within them. While this chapter will focus on such distinctive spaces, it will also further demonstrate the importance of spatial engagement to the action sequence.

Titling structures like the Burj Khalifa and the Guggenheim iconic calls attention to both their representative and venerable qualities. For Charles Jencks, in 'the age of electronic reproduction, the notion of an icon, coming from the Greek word for a religious image and copy, took on specific digital meanings', and has come to indicate something '*reduced* as an image': 'a visual one-liner that explains its function without words'.[5] This explanatory or emblematic function is less pertinent than the capacity for such an approach to enigmatically demand global press attention.[6] Such touristic appeal is a clear reason for their inclusion within action sequences, the buildings being graphic elements that become associated with the film in marketing materials. The action sequences set within and upon these buildings moreover exhibit the innate tendency of such sequences to be closely attuned to the particulars of space, in the same manner as the action protagonist is required to be, and therefore highlight the importance spatial specificity to the action film. The inhabitation of space provided by these sequences will be analysed using the work of Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau in particular, the writing of the former on the lived experience of architecture and contemporary urbanism being explored in conjunction with the thoughts of the latter on the individual's tactical appropriations of otherwise controlled space. First, the manner in which action sequences can reflect the spatialities of their settings will be indicated through a brief scene from *True Lies* (1994); here the use of the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles shows how action sequences can respond to and embellish highly

[5] Charles Jencks, *Critical Modernism: Where is Post-Modernism Going?*, 5th edn of *What is Post-Modernism?* (London: Wiley, 2007), p. 62, emphasis in original.
[6] On the branding possibilities of iconic structures, see Charles Jencks, *The Iconic Building* (New York: Rizzoli, 2005), pp. 44–45.

particular qualities of certain built spaces. *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* will then be shown to have a symbiotic relationship with the Burj Khalifa, the tent-pole blockbuster entering into a reciprocal marketing arrangement with the newly built hotel in Dubai. A showcase for the hotel's height rather than anything else, the central action sequence reveals the film's focus on blank and automated spaces which, though interacted with forcefully and unusually by the team of protagonists, cannot be fully inhabited. This is in marked contrast to *The International*, which presents a frantic but invested appropriation of an initially disorienting space. In all cases, the impact and effect of the action sequences is dependent upon the architectural context.

True Lies – The Bonaventure Hotel

In order to demonstrate the potential kinship of action sequences to critical theory, it is necessary to briefly describe a sequence that would seem to refute this claim. The strategies of disembedding and spatial bricolage undertaken by the 1994 action film *True Lies* seem to contradict the importance of space in the action sequence, working as the sequence under consideration does to occlude legibility, but as the following will make clear this is not the case. The sequence takes place in the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, a building whose spatiality has been widely discussed following Fredric Jameson's description of it, and which is often interpreted as a bewildering site of postmodernist confusion, an enclosed world whose purpose is to dazzle and disorient. Reflecting these noted spatial qualities, an early chase scene in the film uses the lobby of the hotel in a similar manner.

The scene begins on the streets of Washington D.C., protagonist Harry Tasker pursued by terrorists into the Georgetown Park Mall. He outguns many of them in a restroom then tracks their leader through the streets on horseback, the chase leading through neoclassical lobbies, restaurant kitchens, parking structures, and into the Bonaventure lobby. Tasker finally follows the terrorist to the roof (the two of them taking opposing external glass elevators) but the chase is cut short when Tasker's horse refuses to leap from the building after the terrorist escapes by jumping his motorcycle to a nearby adjacent rooftop. The sequence is semi-comic, using the incongruous element of the horse to undercut the intensity of the action and the threat of violence. Further incongruity is added through the use of the Los Angeles Bonaventure itself in a chase

that ostensibly takes place in Washington; but, as will be shown, it is an incongruity entirely appropriate to the spatiality of the hotel.

The chase is initially anchored in the city of Washington through location shooting in the distinctive interior of the Georgetown Mall, itself a minor tourist icon. The conclusion to the sequence – a rooftop gallop and subsequent precarious dangle over the edge of the Bonaventure – is filmed on a soundstage, the surrounding city skyline a back projection. Though indistinct, the Washington Monument can be made out in the distance. Far from an ambiguous urban framework, a purposeful collage of geography (as in the creation of Gotham city in the most recent Batman franchise (2005–2012)), this is clearly intended as a geographically verisimilar representation of the capital city of the United States. As a result, the use of the Los Angeles Bonaventure is striking, its insertion into the context of the city of Washington – an insertion which involves not just the use of the lobby but, most conspicuously, the spherical external elevators – potentially stressing what Flanagan considers to be the 'purely structural' nature of space in the action film. Does this architectural picking-and-choosing demonstrate the lack of importance that particular spaces hold for action sequences, spaces whose purpose would then just be to furnish a stage for spectacular sights, such as actor Arnold Schwarzenegger on horseback in a contemporary urban context?

On the contrary, the depiction of the Bonaventure in *True Lies* functions in accordance with much critical discussion of the spatiality of the building, and shows that the film is responding to and articulating the peculiarities of the site. Something of a 'scratching post for anyone with anything to say about postmodernism',[7] the hotel is understood by Jameson and many others to be an analagon of subjective experience in postmodernity. It creates a 'postmodern hyperspace' that transcends 'the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world'.[8] In a related operation, the building separates itself from its local context: 'it does not wish to be a part of the city but rather its equivalent and replacement or substitute', and to this end the entrances are downplayed.[9] This sense of disconnection is fundamental to Edward Soja's account

[7] James Donald, 'Talking the Talk, Walking the Walk', *Screen* 40.3 (Autumn 1999), pp. 295–303 (p. 299).
[8] Jameson, 1991, p. 44.
[9] Jameson, 1991, p. 40.

of the building, which for him 'recapitulates and reflects the sprawling manufactured spaces of Los Angeles', becoming a 'symbol of the splintered labyrinth that stretches sixty miles around it', 'a concentrated representation of the restructured spatiality of the late capitalist city.' Given that for Soja Los Angeles is itself a metonym of the global system, the hotel therefore does double duty as an icon of the city and of contemporary capitalism: it is 'a mesocosm of postmodernity'.[10]

In these ways both writers see the Bonaventure as a space both iconic and conventional (or at least indicative). More than a symptom or mirroring of the system of late capitalism, the hotel is a

> crucial part of such a capitalism's own spatial production and reproduction, and of the production of new forms of subjectivity appropriate to it: a kind of education or training, so to speak, in how "to live" in an emergent world constituted through ever-more-transitory and fugitive flows of capital and commodities.[11]

To this end, the hotel's 'superficial reflections bewilder co-ordination and encourage submission instead', something it shares with the overwhelming capacity of late capitalism to dazzle and distract using commodity fetishism.[12] Spatiality affects, overpowers and re-makes the individual submitted to it. In the Bonaventure, this involves severance from context, a postmodernist autonomy in which the building both reflects and recapitulates Los Angeles but also somehow stands apart and separate from it.[13] This positioning of the hotel is reflected in *True Lies*, which adds to the frustrated processes of cognitive mapping inherent in the design of the Bonaventure by removing it entirely from its locative coordinates and making of it an incongruous visual spectacle.

Constructing an urban space that is an amalgam of specific, iconic places (the Georgetown Mall, the Bonaventure Hotel), *True Lies* manifests the changed experience

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[10] Soja, 1989, pp. 243–244.
[11] David Cunningham, 'The Architecture of Money: Jameson, Abstraction and Form', in Nadir Lahiji (ed), *The Political Unconscious of Architecture: Re-Opening Jameson's Narrative* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 37–56 (p. 47).
[12] Soja, 1989, p. 244.
[13] A rhetoric of hermetic sealing and disregard for social contact is also expressed in Jean Baudrillard's brief, Jameson-inspired passage on the 'perfect, self-sufficient' and unfathomable hotel, and Rem Koolhaas's critique of the lobby, 'a hermetic interior, sealed against the real'. Jean Baudrillard, *America*, Chris Turner (trans.) (London & New York: Verso, 2010), pp. 62–63; Rem Koolhaas, 'Atlanta in Edward Robbins & Rodolphe El-Khoury (eds), *Shaping the City: Studies in History, Theory and Urban Design* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 5–13 (p. 7).

of space in the contemporary city. Places are disembedded and recombined in a manner that disregards concrete experience.[14] They are treated as 'independent and autonomous, to be shaped according to aesthetic aims and principles which have nothing necessarily to do with any overarching social objective',[15] nor, it might be added, any realist framework. The insertion of the Bonaventure into the framework of a different city works to underscore the revelation that 'the representation of space itself has come to be felt as incompatible with the representation of the body' in postmodernity, an experience that can be as terrifying as it is exhilarating.[16] Entrance to the lobby is disguised through cutting, further indicating the Bonaventure's inaccessibility, and Harry Tasker's engagement with it is from a mounted position, his unwillingness to connect with the building prompting him to ask two perturbed guests to press the buttons in the elevator so that he does not have to. Most tellingly, this bricolage is performed by *True Lies* without narrative reason or explicit or implicit motives beyond the desire to feature a noteworthy and striking space; it is a depthless presentation of a spectacular and inauthentic spatiality which frustrates any kind of mapping, cognitive or otherwise (as does the hotel itself).

The kinship between the disembedding in *True Lies* and the experiences of the Bonaventure discussed in critical work by Jameson, Soja and others, indicates that the action sequence is *very much* perceptually attuned to the distinct spatiality of the building. Rather than function as a 'non-specific' or 'purely functional' space, the Bonaventure is engaged with in ways that evoke broader accounts of the qualities of the building, and in this way the action sequence provides a suitably disorienting inhabitation of this disorienting space. The kinds of spatiality presented by the buildings and films in the following analyses may vary greatly from *True Lies* and the Bonaventure in many respects, but they likewise demonstrate a reciprocal relationship between the particular spatial experience of the architecture being used and the way that this space is represented by the sequence itself.

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[14] On these processes of disembedding and recombination, see Michael Dear & Steven Flusty, 'Postmodern Urbanism', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88.1 (March 1998), pp. 50–72.

[15] Harvey, 1994, p. 66.

[16] Jameson, 1991, p. 34. In this, the Bonaventure is situated in the right city: Norman M. Klein has written about Los Angeles as a city in which memory is strategically erased along with social spaces, leading to discomfort and disorientation. Norman M. Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (London & New York: Verso, 1997).

***Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* – The Burj Khalifa**

The construction of purposefully iconic buildings has emerged as an architectural trend in the years following the completion of Frank Gehry's New Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. In Jencks's view, Gehry's undulating silver building put 'architecture on a par with the best contemporary art to explore freely the possibilities of open-ended creativity'.[17] The museum was influential because it was both a creative and financial triumph: as Gehry himself notes, '[a]fter it was built people started going to Bilbao and that changed the economics of the city. It was wildly successful'.[18] In his book *The Iconic Building* Jencks explores the qualities that make monumental buildings either triumphs or failures, suggesting that they are at their best when consisting of 'enigmatic signifiers' that refer to local conditions or relevant emotions but do so in a veiled or interesting way. However, despite the architectural play at work in many such buildings they are fundamentally concerned with establishing brand identity. Bilbao led many cities to want to be put 'on the map' in the same fashion,[19] and prompted corporations to seek iconic flagship stores in order to 'distinguish their brand'.[20] This is not, Jencks admits, a new phenomenon: in the late nineteenth century the Eiffel Tower, a 'useless' structure, quickly became '*the* symbol of Paris, and for the world, France', an architectural icon for and of a nation.[21]

Nonetheless, the trend is pronounced in the twenty-first century, buildings like the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles (by Frank Gehry), the CCTV Building in Beijing (by Rem Koolhaas) and the reconstruction of the Ground Zero site in New York (by Daniel Libeskind and others) all in very different ways indicating an emergent spatiality of immense, iconic forms. This recent architectural iconicism is tied to developments in spatial perception no less than the building of the Eiffel Tower was tied to new experiences of space and time in the industrial era. As social geographer Charles Withers notes, 'in the face of "globalisation," questions of locality, sense of place and of identity in place matter now more than ever', yet these questions are also deeply influenced by the ephemerality and fragmentation of cultural production fostered by an

[17] Jencks, 2005, p. 7.
[18] Quoted in Jencks, 2005, p. 12.
[19] Jencks, 2005, p. 18.
[20] Jencks, 2005, p. 45.
[21] Jencks, 2005, p. 199, emphasis in original.

economy of flexible accumulation.[22] If a building, and by an extension a local area, company or institution, is to receive public attention and be discussed, then it must be in some way noteworthy. A modern iconic structure can achieve this, doing so in part by creating a symbol that can be divorced from context and which does not rely on the history or particular qualities of its material location.

These buildings, then, stand out in part because they contrast against and challenge their surroundings, the proliferation of them in danger of turning city skylines into 'brandscapes'.[23] Ackbar Abbas suggests that in seeking 'legibility' and 'imageability' through contemporary architectural monuments, the 'city as spectacle' is too successful in this regard, leading to 'hyperlegibility and instant recognition, as cities design images for themselves to boost their tourist trade'.[24] Iconic buildings furthermore paradoxically lessen their potential for legibility at the level of lived experience in their focus upon ephemerality and signification on a gargantuan scale. Instead of buildings for use, these are buildings for dissemination into the globalised image economy.[25] Their size and scale works towards this purpose. For architecture critic Heinrich Klotz, massive buildings wrapped in glass like the Bonaventure cast elementary geometric silhouettes upon the skyline, and so seem impossible to read 'in human terms', appearing to 'herald something entirely new, something cosmic'. 'Uniform and gigantic', such buildings 'stand conspicuously in the urban landscape yet defy being measured in proportion to anything', including the human body itself, the proportions of which are abandoned in favour of 'geometric figures', that are 'intrinsically defined, size-indifferent abstractions'. 'We are beginning to live in two worlds', Klotz suggests: 'one which refers to us and is ours, and another one which is directed toward something else, something immeasurable and incomprehensible'.[26] Though originally written in 1984, these words remain pertinent. In commenting on the two-fold appeal of iconic buildings (the latter predicated on an impression of unknowability) they also suggest how the action sequences that take place within them might be understood. Capitalising upon the

[22] Withers, 2009, p. 638.
[23] Monica Montserrat Degen & Gillian Rose, 'The Sensory Experience of Urban Design: The Role of Walking and Perceptual Memory', *Urban Studies* 49.15 (November 2012), pp. 3271–3287 (p. 3272).
[24] Ackbar Abbas, 'Cinema, the City, and the Cinematic', in Krause & Petro (eds), *Global Cities*, pp. 142–156 (p. 146).
[25] As described in M. Christine Boyer, 'The Imaginary World of Cybercities', in Edward Robbins & Rodolphe El-Khoury (eds), *Shaping the City: Studies in History, Theory and Urban Design* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 231–251 (p. 246).
[26] Klotz, Heinrich, *The History of Postmodern Architecture*, Radka Donnell (trans.) (Cambridge, Mass. & London: The MIT Press, 1988), pp. 60–65.

importance of iconic buildings as cultural signs with immense value in a global image economy, action sequences also relate these buildings – themselves otherwise 'unrelated to human proportions' – to bodily experience, appropriating immense and alienating structural forms through the body of the action protagonist. The lived world and the immeasurable world are in this way brought together and negotiated.

It is in the context of this trend towards the 'abandonment of human proportions' in architecture that the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the tallest building in the world as of 2013, should be placed. Designed by Adrian Smith, this 2,723 ft high multi-purpose structure in the main business district is central to the city's ongoing project to become a hub of tourism through the amassing of distinctive and occasionally bizarre architectural feats (others include artificial island chains resembling palm trees and a hotel in the shape of an enormous sailboat).[27] The design of the Burj Khalifa nods towards local conditions by evoking 'the geometries of the desert flower and the patterning systems embodied in Islamic architecture', but rather than being dictated by functional necessities its incredible height is instead part of a calculated strategy to garner as much press attention as possible.[28] In this it has been successful, although the amount of occupancy in the building, which contains a '15-story hotel, 37 floors of offices, and 1,100 apartments',[29] was low immediately after it opened due to economic problems in Dubai following the 2008 financial crisis and the collapse of the region's real estate market. The building has a reciprocal relationship with *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol*, this also being a financially costly, heavily marketed blockbuster. As will now be shown, the action in the film works to appropriate the exterior of this vast and potentially incomprehensible structure, but also complicates this experience through stressing the qualities of homogeneity and anonymity that define the interior.

The symbiotic relationship of the film to the building should be understood as something of a mutual branding exercise, the brands of the Mission: Impossible franchise (1996–ongoing) – synonymous with star Tom Cruise – and of Dubai itself

[27] For more on these creations, see Megan K. Stack, 'In Dubai, the Sky's No Limit', *Los Angeles Times,* 13 October 2005 <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/oct/13/world/fg-dubai13> [accessed 15 June 2012].
[28] Irish Eden Belleza 'Burj Khalifa: Towering Challenge for Builders', *Gulfnews*, 4 January 2010 <http://gulfnews.com/business/property/burj-khalifa-towering-challenge-for-builders-1.561802> [accessed 20 June 2012].
[29] Witold Rybczynski, 'What Dubai's Burj Khalifa – The Tallest Building in the World – Owes To Frank Lloyd Wright', *Slate*, 13 January 2010 <http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/architecture/2010/01/dubai_debt.html> [accessed 15 June 2012].

mutually reinforcing each other. The Burj Khalifa benefits from being put on film for a global audience as much as *Ghost Protocol* benefits from affiliation with a contemporary record-breaking architectural structure.[30] The world premiere of the film took place at the Dubai International Film Festival, further emphasising links with the city and prompting *Hollywood Reporter* to call the film 'a mega-budget ad for shooting in the region'.[31] While part of an established and prosperous franchise, *Ghost Protocol* followed what was considered to be an under-performing *Mission: Impossible III* (2006) and a series of films that had led to a widespread questioning of Cruise as the box office draw he had been throughout the 1980s and 1990s.[32] Both Cruise and Dubai had previously suffered unexpected economic turmoil and negative press attention related to their exposure as landmark entities in their respective fields of film stardom and capital investment; colluding together on *Ghost Protocol* was a way to minimise risk and maximise publicity (in the film's case this can be proven to have worked: it was the fifth highest grossing film of 2011[33]).

In the lead-up and throughout the action sequence itself the film works to accentuate the verisimilitude of its presentation, having been shot mostly at the Burj Khalifa (with some additional stage-based shooting) and in the immediate vicinity of the building. Extensive digital effects are avoided except in removing safety wires: the authenticity of the location and also the stunts themselves are central to the pleasure of the sequence.[34] Forced to climb the exterior of the building from the 119th to 130th floors using electronic suction gloves, Hunt moves through an open window onto the outside of the structure, the camera tracking up and craning over him slowly, looking at the long drop

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[30] The profile of Cruise, a major international star, dominated the poster campaigns for the other films in the Mission: Impossible franchise; in a subtle shift, the posters for *Ghost Protocol* position him alongside the Burj Khalifa and indicate the star, the building, and stunts as being the three key pleasures of the film, all reliant upon one another.

[31] Scott Roxborough, 'Why the World Premiere of 'MI:4' Will Put Dubai on the Map', *Hollywood Reporter*, 30 November 2011 <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/why-world-premiere-mi4-will-267523> [accessed 15 June 2012].

[32] For more on this, see Brandon Gray, '"Mission: Impossible III" Doesn't Thrill' *Box Office Mojo*, 8 May 2006 <http://boxofficemojo.com/news/?id=2061&p=.htm> [accessed 15 June 2012]; and Brooks Barnes, 'Tom Cruise Is Again a Box-Office Draw', *The New York Times*, 1 January 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/02/movies/mission-impossible-with-tom-cruise-still-box-office-leader.html> [accessed 15 June 2012].

[33] This is according to *Box Office Mojo*. See Anonymous, '2011 Worldwide Grosses', *Box Office Mojo*, undated <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?view2=worldwide&yr=2011&p=.htm> [accessed 15 June 2012].

[34] On these stunts, see Michael Ordoña, 'Mission: Impossible's' [*sic*] Tall Order: Filming the Skyscraper Stunts', *Los Angeles Times: Hero Complex*, 6 December 2011 <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/2011/12/06/mission-impossible-ghost-protocol-photos-tom-cruise-filming-stunts/#/0> [accessed 15 June 2012].

below and carefully rotating while facing down in order to keep Hunt in the centre of the frame. This lengthy shot anchors the viewer with the experiential coordinates of the protagonist, meticulously presenting his gradual movement, rather than generating excitement through frenetic editing. Likewise, a later shot follows Hunt as he runs and leaps from a 130th floor window out onto the exterior, a moment of experiential mimicry on the part of the camera indicating that the film is 'stylistically "in sympathy" with the action body's predicament', a sympathy intended to be shared by the viewer.[35]

For Lisa Purse, action films 'trade in spectacles of physical mastery', providing 'fantasies of empowerment' that forcefully demonstrate the ability of the body to rise above the strictures of everyday life.[36] Keeping the body in shot and operating in physically recognisable, if outlandish and borderline impossible ways, 'flesh[es] out' the viewer's film-viewing experience by relating the movements of the action protagonist to their own experience of the world.[37] The camera movement, cutting, and framing in this sequence all work hard to provide the information required for such a 'fleshing out' to take place. Extending this, the exterior climb and rappel in *Ghost Protocol* can also be understood as fleshing out the architecture featured, using (the presentation of) a lived-body experience to embody a structure which, from the outside, would appear not to relate to human proportions.[38] In this way the building becomes a site of tactile improvisation rather than an alienating signifier of tallness. The grandeur remains present, but is mapped using the images of Hunt moving across its surface, and is in this way made bodily relevant.

In his actions, Hunt appropriates the building's exterior, the concept of appropriation here understood specifically as a tactical act performed by an individual, as described by Michel de Certeau. His model of tactics and strategies – put forward in *The Practice of Everyday Life* – uses the concept of appropriation to appreciate the personal use of space within the restrictions of predetermined spatial form, a form dictated by invisible and unassailable forces. Appropriations are tactical encroachments on a strategically controlled space. They 'weave places together' by enacting '[p]edestrian speech act[s]',

[35] Purse, 2011, p. 52.
[36] Purse, 2011, p. 45.
[37] Purse, 2011, p. 52. Purse here follows the work of Laura Marks and Vivian Sobchack. Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000); Sobchack, 2004.
[38] The use of IMAX cameras for the sequence further deepens the viewer's experience by providing a larger, more encompassing image and correspondingly higher level of image-detail.

an individual using appropriation to enunciate their own identity.[39] These tactics have become increasingly important to everyday life, since in bureaucratically structured societies the subject's capacity to enact change diminishes the larger and more technocratic the system in which they live becomes:

> Increasingly constrained, yet less concerned with these vast frameworks, the individual detaches himself [*sic*] from them without being able to escape them and can henceforth only try to outwit them, to pull tricks on them, to rediscover, within an electronicized and computerized megalopolis, the "art" of the hunters and rural folk of earlier days.[40]

De Certeau is concerned with the ability of the average citizen to forge their own identity even within the panoptic and gridded space of urban life. Such a subject actualises possibilities inherent in a planned spatial order, but he also 'moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements'.[41] However, as de Certeau makes clear, this appropriation is fleeting and far from total. While strategies are able to 'produce, tabulate, and impose' space in conformity with 'abstract models', tactics work to 'use, manipulate, and divert these spaces',[42] all without being under 'any illusion that [the dominant order] will change any time soon'.[43] The walker, while 'increas[ing] the number of possibilities'[44] in the dominated environment, does so only temporarily: 'A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance'.[45]

Action sequences provide clear corollaries with de Certeau's model. In *Ghost Protocol*, Hunt invents new ways of engaging with the monolithic Burj Khalifa, improvising with the raw material of the building: the glass windows become a mode of transportation, a fire hose becomes a climbing rope, and the undulating architecture is employed as a springboard. Hunt is not using the building as its designers and owners intend it to be used, but rather in a way that serves his own goals, and he is therefore appropriating it. Like the tactic itself, the appropriations enacted by Hunt and his team are temporary: they have at their disposal 'no base where [they] can capitalize on [their] advantages,

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[39] De Certeau, 1988, p. 97.
[40] De Certeau, 1988, pp. xxiii–xxiv.
[41] De Certeau, 1988, p. 98.
[42] De Certeau, 1988, pp. 29–30.
[43] De Certeau, 1988, p. 26.
[44] De Certeau, 1988, p. 98.
[45] De Certeau, 1988, p. xix.

prepare [their] expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances', and instead they 'watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing"', manipulating events to 'turn them into "opportunities", and 'whatever [they] win, [they do] not keep'.[46] The spectacular nature of the appropriation in *Ghost Protocol* may seem somewhat removed from de Certeau's stated tactical acts such as walking, reading, cooking and the multiple uses to which Charlie Chaplin puts his cane.[47] However, the hyperbolic spectacle of action sequences, through offering inflated examples of such tactical operations, forcefully direct attention towards these processes of appropriation; they bring to the fore and inflate the existing tactical practices of everyday life in a spectacular manner.

Ian Buchanan suggests that in the work of de Certeau space is not conceived as a naturally occurring phenomenon, but something that must be actualised, and that following such a view any movement in space 'is a process of *transforming* space, not inhabiting it'.[48] Inhabitation necessarily involves this transformation, this changing of a space into one's own. Action protagonists make this process visible in the kinetic, engaged spatial inhabitation they perform during action sequences, and the way they put space to use in ways other than those intended by its designers. Describing an early instance of such personal expression, de Certeau speaks of the child who 'still scrawls and daubs on his schoolbooks; even if he [*sic*] is punished for this crime, he has made a space for himself and signs his existence as an author upon it'.[49] The action protagonist is a development of this, trespassing and enacting criminal damage in order to make, or author, a space for themselves. The appeal for the viewer is this presentation of spectacular authorship and successful tactical appropriation. In *Ghost Protocol*, the use of verisimilar geographical presentation and the grounding of the experience in Hunt's bodily movement work hard to make this presentation all the more effective, the visual appropriation supported by an appeal to the sensory coordinates of the viewer.

For de Certeau, appropriations are achieved in passing, almost by accident, and they are not outside the ruling system but resistances within it. Although the concept of tactical individuals making their own use of the system without this system being able to do

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[46] De Certeau, 1988, p. xix.
[47] For these examples, see de Certeau, 1988, p. xix, p. xxi, p. 98.
[48] Ian Buchanan, 'Heterophenomenology, or de Certeau's Theory of Space', *Social Semiotics* 6.1 (1996), pp. 111–132 (p. 117, emphasis added).
[49] De Certeau, 1988, p. 31.

much about it is appealing in its utopianism, such a reading of de Certeau's work is potentially simplistic. *The Practice of Everyday Life* identifies how the individual copes with technocracy, but it implies that this technocracy will remain essentially unchallenged. As Mark Poster notes, tactics unavoidably operate within the commodity economy of late capitalism: they 'continuously disrupt this [commodity] logic even while confirming it', making de Certeau's theory of the everyday 'no outline of revolution, no grand strategy of upheaval'.[50] This equally describes the action film itself, which often depicts rebellious and outrageous actions, but does so in a manner that reinforces the existing order. Fred Pfeil may note that the action protagonist frequently achieves their goals by 'eschewing the support and regulation of inept and/or craven law enforcement institutions, ignoring established procedures, and running "wild" instead',[51] and Purse may further suggest that the action sequence capitalises on the desires of the viewer to 'transcend the quotidian' and escape 'visible and invisible regulatory frameworks',[52] but this disobedient action is highly provisional. Mark Gallagher rightly observes that, despite presenting and valorising non-normative behaviour, the narratives of action films 'appear to reinforce patriarchal structures of white male authority, privilege, and omnipotence', and so support the existing order.[53] Action sequences appeal to the pleasures of nonstandard physical activity and display even as the narratives in which they are situated continually validate the overarching (economic, patriarchal, regulatory) structures of everyday life: the quotidian is momentarily transcended, but the frameworks remain in place. The protagonists of these films, though operating outside of or in opposition to dominant and dominating institutions, often do so only temporarily to clear their own sullied names in the eyes of this system or to root out corrupted internal elements of it (as in *Ghost Protocol*).[54] By doing so, and to paraphrase Poster, they confirm a particular logic of lived experience even as they disrupt it.

The manner in which the film depicts the interior of the building further underlines the inescapable foundation of capitalist controlled space upon which tactical improvisations might fleetingly act. Hunt's climbing inhabits what was previously an iconic

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[50] Mark Poster, 'The Question of Agency: Michel de Certeau and the History of Consumerism', *Diacritics* 22.2 (Summer 1992), pp. 94–107 (p. 103).
[51] Pfeil, 1998, p. 146.
[52] Purse, 2011, p. 64.
[53] Gallagher, 2006, p.46.
[54] In three of the four Mission: Impossible films Hunt and his team must 'go rogue', having been disavowed by the authorities, in their attempts to clear their records and solve a central mystery.

abstraction, and this transitory appropriation of external space is enacted in the sequence alongside a similar appropriation of the interior, but the presentation of these spaces reveals a tension between the iconic intentions of the Burj Khalifa's macro design and the realities of global capitalist homogeneity operating upon the micro features of the building (rooms, corridors, furnishings and so forth). In addition, though depicted within the narrative of the film as tactical, this appropriation nonetheless takes place in the production context of *Ghost Protocol* in a permitted, synergistic fashion to consolidate brand identity and marketplace differentiation, as has been shown. This is akin to de Certeau's model of tactics, functioning as they do within a capitalist framework. As Poster, following de Certeau, makes clear, although a cook is free to fashion a meal from a combination of products in ways of their own making, they are still nonetheless required to buy the products in the first place, 'which from the standpoint of the capitalist is all that really matters'.[55]

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* de Certeau suggests that all skyscrapers serve something of a 'scopic drive' to 'make the complexity of the city readable', immobilising its movement to make of it a readable text.[56] As Barry Langford emphasises in his reading of de Certeau's work, this petrified and stilled viewpoint is not *revealed* by the panoramic perspective, but rather the goal to view the city this way – as held by technocrats and urban planners – works actively and intentionally to visually construct it in this mode, to produce a petrified space.[57] It is indicative that de Certeau uses the iconic form of the World Trade Center in New York to investigate this trait, demonstrating as the buildings did the intertwined operations of global capitalism and contemporary monumental architectural production in the creation and domination of space. Being two identical twinned towers they symbolised the reproducibility of corporate space, its fundamental sameness even on a gigantic scale. Such architectural structures may create a blind spot in which the tactics of the individual, 'the ruses and combinations of powers that have no readable identity', can be practiced, but they nonetheless, through their absolute promotion of 'classificatory operations' and rationalisation, function both metonymically and literally as expressions of the strategic

[55] Poster, 1992, p. 103.
[56] De Certeau, 1988, p. 92.
[57] Barry Langford, 'Seeing Only Corpses: Vision and/of Urban Disaster in Apocalyptic Cinema', in Christoph Lindner (ed), *Urban Space and Cityscapes: Perspectives from Modern and Contemporary Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 38–48 (p. 40).

domination of late capitalism.[58] For all the exceptionalism with which the Burj Khalifa is presented in *Ghost Protocol*, both as architecture and as spatial experience, it nonetheless operates in a similar manner.

The spectacular exterior climb is undertaken to gain access to a computer server on the 130th floor, which then allows the team to manipulate the technological infrastructure of the hotel in the building (a hotel itself in reality only as high as the 38th floor, but re-positioned in the film for visual impact). They modify the room numbers and redirect elevators to, as one character puts it, convince 'two people that they've had a meeting which actually really never happened', a façade in part possible because the duped parties, though having done business, have never met in person. The meeting itself involves the exchange of nuclear launch codes, codes that the protagonists intend to make inauthentic (and therefore useless) at the time of the handover. These elements – the altered room numbers and infrastructural manipulation, the impersonation of people and items by falsifications – depict appropriations of a very different type than Hunt's physical expression of lived architectural experience. They rely upon the contemporary global economy of de-personalised information exchange rather than embodied knowledge. In sympathy with this, the rooms of the hotel themselves are blankly modernist and unremarkable, their interchangeability underscored in the ability of the protagonists to make one floor resemble another solely through the changing of door numbers. A shot during the sequence tracks from a room to its counterpart on another floor through the ceiling, revealing their exact correspondence to one another. The view from the windows is remarkable, but throughout the dialogue exchange that follows Hunt's climb it is avoided, shots instead privileging the interior similarity of the rooms. The brief but emphatic placement upon a coffee table of the book *New Frontiers in Architecture: The United Arab Emirates Between Vision and Reality*,[59] which has the Burj Khalifa on its cover, is undermined by its removal from the scene by a protagonist in her preparatory dressing of the space. The specificity of the location is tidied away for the purposes of a smoother corporate dialogue.

The sequence reminds us that, though iconic, the Burj Khalifa is nonetheless a site of capitalistic exchange and creates standardised spatial experiences (hotel rooms) to this

[58] De Certeau, 1988, pp. 94–95.
[59] Oscar Eugenio Bellini & Laura Daglio, *New Frontiers in Architecture: The United Arab Emirates Between Vision and Reality* (Vercelli: White Star, 2010).

end. De Certeau is indebted to Michel Foucault in his understanding of the 'cellular space[s]' around which strategic operations are organised,[60] and Bryan Reynolds and Joseph Fitzpatrick demonstrate how these spaces 'repress all the physical, mental, and political pollutions that would compromise [them]' and substitute the 'stubborn resistances offered by traditions' with a 'nowhen' or a 'synchronic system' of 'univocal scientific strategies'.[61] The interior of the Burj Khalifa is constructed of such nowhens. Inside it is a collection of 'frictionless space[s] designed to accelerate throughput', and as such the qualities of the externality of the building – postmodernist, iconic – are quite literally immaterial, a facet of the ephemeral image economy and little more.[62] That this is the tallest building in the world, whose architecture seeks in some enigmatic way to be signifier of traditional Arabic patterning and desert horticulture, does not matter for the impersonal business encounter for which the interior provides the stage.[63]

The appropriations of the Burj Khalifa, which are both external (in which they are spectacular, bodily) and internal (in which they are technologised, inauthentic), suggest that, following Buchanan's understanding of de Certeau, 'agency is still possible despite the baffling advances of technology, and the resulting incomprehensible futurity of space'.[64] This agency, however, is firmly situated within the strategic frameworks of controlled, or dominated space. *Ghost Protocol* valorises specific architectural accomplishment in its depiction of the Burj Khalifa, but this valorisation occurs at the level of branding, and in part covers for the essential similarity of strategically dominated spaces. While the action sequence that takes place there provides an inhabitation of a potentially 'immeasurable and incomprehensible' space, a space that is otherwise 'self-contained and unrelated to human proportions',[65] it also depicts interior spaces (and a set of practices related to such spaces) that are, to adapt Flanagan's words on the geography of the action sequence, 'purely structural' 'non-specific backdrops'[66]

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[60] De Certeau, 1988, p. 46.
[61] Bryan Reynolds & Joseph Fitzpatrick, 'The Transversality of Michel de Certeau: Foucault's Panoptic Discourse and Cartographic Impulse', *Diacritics* 29.3 (Autumn 1999), pp. 63–80 (p. 69).
[62] On this kind of space, see Harvey, 1994, p. 114.
[63] This oppositional yet mutually reinforced relationship between the specificity of places and the impersonal encounters that occur in them is also shown in an early sequence in the Moscow Kremlin, which involves forged identities and counterfeit projections of the space itself: Hunt and an accomplice create a digitised impression of a bland corridor within the building in order to break into a room to steal a personnel file – a file that is revealed to be missing. They are then discovered when an antagonist impersonates them in a radio communication.
[64] Buchanan, 1996, p. 112.
[65] Klotz, 1988, pp. 63–65.
[66] Flanagan, 2004, p. 110.

constructed according to the logic of frictionless capitalist exchange. Such spaces, while open to appropriation by tactical subjects who create new meanings and possibilities within them, are monolithic icons of a commodity system based on equivalency and homogeneity, a status the Burj Khalifa exemplifies.

The International – The Guggenheim New York

Those spaces that do not appeal to the logic of equivalence found in the Burj Khalifa can, in the words of Henri Lefebvre, possess a kind of monumentality that makes them impossible to reduce to semiological codes, being instead a 'plunge into a particular world' which is irreducible to systems or symbols.[67] He has in mind structures like cathedrals, and suggests that this kind of spatiality is hard to find in the contemporary built environment, but it is clear that part of the goal of iconic structures like the Bonaventure of the Burj Khalifa is to emulate this quality of overwhelming present-ness: Jencks stresses that '[e]motion-laden experience is a necessary aspect of the successful iconic building' and that buildings providing such an intensified architectural experience can and should generate visceral emotional reactions in their inhabitants.[68] However, Jencks's attention to the need for iconic structures to be 'enigmatic signifiers', loaded with a variety of potentially oppositional metaphorical and literal meanings and analogies, pulls the contemporary iconic building away from the monumentality Lefebvre describes.[69] Jencks asserts that readability of some sort or another is essential to an iconic structure, while those buildings Lefebvre speaks of must quite specifically be *acted*, rather than read.[70]

This thesis suggests that action sequences perform a kind of acting out of space, rather than a simple reading of them, and in this way provide extensive access to and appreciation of the traits of contemporary space. These sequences embody spaces that are otherwise alienating or disconcerting. This process is provisional however, as indicated by the analysis of *Ghost Protocol*. The Burj Khalifa, both in that film and as a profilmic entity, is a loaded symbol of capital expenditure and local pride (or hubris), and an assertion of regional economic ambition. It is designed to be read, and *Ghost*

[67] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 221.
[68] Jencks, 2005, p. 55.
[69] Jencks, 2005, p. 24.
[70] See Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 222.

Protocol takes part in this process of reading by both offering the building to a global film audience and by performing its own acts of interpretation by depicting the building as an exotic site mixing incredible altitude with an interchangeable, business-geared interior. While the improvisational movement across its exterior embodies the structure, the interior of it presents not so much a 'plunge into a particular world' as an elevation of a standardised spatial experience to a great height.

Jencks describes the New York Guggenheim as 'the first example of the iconic icon',[71] and it is to an action sequence within the central space of this art gallery that this chapter will now turn. Like *Ghost Protocol*, action thriller *The International* features an iconic building, appropriating it by staging highly physical action there. Representations of bodily movement within the space are coupled with filmmaking strategies that reflect its particular spatiality, and in this way the viewer of the sequence is given a sensation of spatial inhabitation and knowledge through the intensified experience of the action sequence. However, the sequence in *The International* differs fundamentally from *Ghost Protocol* in its treatment of space, thanks partly to the fact that it is set in a very different kind of building. Reacting to a spatiality that requires processes of *acting* rather than *reading* to be understood, *The International* provides a qualitatively different appropriation of space than that depicted by *Ghost Protocol*, further indicating the extent to which action sequences are reliant upon and responsive to their settings.

Having pursued a vital lead to the Guggenheim Museum in New York, *The International*'s protagonist Louis Salinger, an Interpol Agent, witnesses a covert exchange near the top of the building's spiralling rotunda. Attacked by gunmen, Salinger's colleague, a New York Police Detective, is killed, and he is forced to join forces with the 'consultant' (or assassin) he was previously trying to arrest. They shoot their way down the ramp and escape together, although the consultant is mortally wounded. As in *Ghost Protocol*, the film enters into a reciprocal relationship with architecture to generate an identity distinct from other films and other action sequences. The characteristic curves of the rotunda are used as graphic elements on the various posters for the film as well as for intertitles within the film's trailer (which also features clips from the sequence) and menu screens on the DVD. The film brands itself with design elements taken from the museum, using the building to differentiate *The*

[71] Jencks, 2005, p. 28.

International within the cinematic marketplace, reviewers often commenting on this sequence and its noteworthiness.[72]

The use of the Guggenheim is also part of a wider pattern of architectural references throughout the film, the sites featured being consciously utilised for their spatial affects and shown to illustrate a range of approaches for visualising power, from the glass surfaces that feign transparency in many bank headquarters in the twenty-first century, to the outsize and fascistic monumentality of the Milan Centrale Train Station, and finally the geometric ornament and religiosity of the Blue Mosque in Istanbul.[73] The Guggenheim should itself be seen in relation to the Old National Gallery in Berlin, featured earlier in the film, which is depicted using highly symmetrical framings and simple track and pan camera movements, evoking the square, ordered canvases found there. The excitement generated by the later scenes within the Guggenheim is therefore partly a result of the spatiality of that museum, not just a consequence of the action that occurs there.

Throughout the sequence the viewer is positioned with Salinger, and his apprehensive encounter with the space of the Guggenheim is something of a heightened version of Jameson's expressed experience of the Bonaventure Hotel, that building being an 'alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment' and generating, for Jameson, feelings of bewilderment.[74] Director of *The International* Tom Tykwer states that these qualities were precisely the reason the Guggenheim was chosen as a location:

> if there's one energetic unfathomable building in the world that makes you spin a little and lose your sense of direction, it's obviously the Guggenheim […]. It has this incredible aspect of being a sculpture in itself. It's its own protagonist. And when you go there people are equally experiencing the building as an emotional system.[75]

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[72] See Ty Burr's review for a representative example: 'The International', *The Boston Globe*, 13 February 2009 <http://www.boston.com/ae/movies/articles/2009/02/13/follow_the_money/> [accessed 3 July 2012].

[73] An important caveat to the emphasised geographical verisimilitude displayed by *The International* is its use of digital effects to change the location of Zaha Hadid's Science Center in Wolfsburg, Germany, from that city to a seafront in Italy, where it becomes the headquarters of a weapons manufacturer. The icon is here manipulated by the filmmakers because of the appeal of a striking image (which the building certainly provides), rather than an architectural enquiry linked to accurate spatial presentation.

[74] Jameson, 1991, p. 44.

[75] Quoted in Brian Brooks, '"We're Really Not Saying All Private Bankers Are Murderers": Tom Tykwer on "The International"', *Indiewire*, 13 February 2009 <http://www.indiewire.com/article/tom_tykwers_the_international_were_really_not_saying_all_private

Salinger is overwhelmed when he enters. A slow track in towards him moves around his body and eventually shows the space of the central void beyond, indicating his confrontation with a new kind of spatiality. At this point, for Tykwer, the character 'loses the concept of space and even time', the perceptible imbalance generated by the curving ramp underlining Salinger's desperate psychology at this point in the story.[76] This imbalance is a fundamental property of the structure itself, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, and is wholly inappropriate for a museum:

> The curve of the walls [is] pronounced and, given the modern artist's preference for larger and larger canvases, that [means] an immediate mismatch. The walls [slope] outward as well, giving each painting a backward tilt […]. Standing to view the paintings on a floor sloping imperceptibly downhill [is] another disconcerting detail.[77]

The gradually widening ramp, structural curves and oddly low rotunda walls all suggest an approach to architecture that eschews the normal appeal to functional Euclidean geometry and instead privileges unique spatial experience. Following Yi-Fu Tuan, this might be considered to have the potential to expand a visitor's 'spatial consciousness'.[78]

Iconic precisely because of these unusual spatial features, rather than because of its emblematic or typical representation of the architecture of New York (to which it is generally antithetical, if such a broad claim can be made), this is not a space that can be easily read, and for this reason it is disconcerting. Shot-reverse-shots between Salinger and the space at his moment of entry suggest his willed attempts to map or understand it. The process of inhabitation that then takes place there is different to that depicted in

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_bankers_ar> [accessed 27 June 2012].

[76] Quoted in Brooks, 2009. The building was certainly not chosen for simplicity's sake: two days of location shooting at the museum were augmented by several weeks filming in a scale replica built in Germany (where much of the production was based), a structure that took many months to design and construct. As Tykwer jokes, 'There were times when we said, "Why do we still call this movie *The International*? We should just call it *The Guggenheim* – we're spending such an incredible amount of time just prepping this one sequence"': quoted in Nick Dawson, 'Tom Tykwer, "The International"', *Filmmaker Magazine*, 13 February 2009 <http://www.filmmakermagazine.com/news/2009/02/tom-tykwer-the-international/> [accessed 30 June 2012].

[77] Meryle Secrest, *Frank Lloyd Wright* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992), p. 549.

[78] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 116. The exhibition at the museum, video art by Julian Rosefeldt, brings movement and colour into the space in a manner that is distracting and inconsistent, the various screens showing a variety of spaces, some of which are presented with rapid cutting and extreme bodily movement at odds with their leisurely contemplation by visitors. The central chandelier is also a work by Rosefeldt, titled *The Opening*, commissioned by the film and designed to pay homage to the spiral structure of the Guggenheim. On Rosefeldt's work here, see Rachel Wolff, 'Shooting Gallery', *Art News*, 1 February 2009 <http://www.artnews.com/2009/02/01/shooting-gallery/> [accessed 29 July 2012].

Ghost Protocol in that it causes considerable physical change: Hunt and his team manipulate the infrastructure of the Burj Khalifa and bodily appropriate the outside of it, but their changes are designed to be covert and reversible; by contrast, the action sequence in *The International* shows not just the process of spatial acclimatisation but illustrates how this process changes both space and its inhabitants. The Guggenheim's smooth, clean white walls are disrupted by the pockmarks of bullet-holes, visually indicating the change the space is undergoing. Early shots emphasise the levelled and potentially duplicitous nature of the space by showing assassins moving along the ramp beneath an unaware Salinger; towards the close of the sequence, Salinger is the one moving unseen one level beneath the remaining assassins. Between these moments, Salinger exchanges gunfire on the run with the assassins across the central void, a series of parallel shots and framings highlighting the mirrored nature of the movements of the two groups. The void is then seen from below in a circling shot matching the movement of the combatants, and further visualises the energy being expended – and how it is changing the space – by showing the shattering glass of the chandelier in the centre as it is torn apart by gunfire. This spatial alteration is finally controlled by Salinger when he aims a machine gun at the pulley holding the chandelier in place, resulting in the immense glass and steel structure dropping to the floor, killing two assassins. This act also makes holes in the glass roof, leading to the gentle falling of snow within the space.

The very precise framing and cutting of the sequence, as well as its subject matter of action-based environmental negotiation, demonstrate clearly the ability and tendency of the action sequence to elucidate space. A process of inhabitation occurs not only for the character of Salinger, but also for the viewer of the sequence, as the positions and movements of the camera inhabit the building in ways they previously did not, moving through it in an increasingly sympathetic manner, mirroring the curve of the rotunda in particular.[79] What was initially disconcerting becomes comprehensible, and is even manipulated to serve the goals of the action protagonist. Salinger increases 'the number

[79] It is worth noting that Matthew Barney's *Cremaster 3* (2002) also depicts bodily spectacle within the Guggenheim, Barney climbing the interior levels of the museum and facing down threats on each one. The similarities indicate how the exertions and tactile appropriations of a body are, in disorienting spatialities such as that of the Guggenheim, an effective way of gaining knowledge and confidence. See Alexandra Keller & Frazer Ward, 'Matthew Barney and the Paradox of the Neo-Avant-Garde Blockbuster', *Cinema Journal* 45.2 (Winter 2006), pp. 3–16 (pp. 7–9).

of possibilities' of the Guggenheim and performs 'a spatial acting-out of the place', enunciating and transforming it through his own actions.[80]

Chapter Conclusion

Jameson, de Certeau and Lefebvre all consider space to exert a powerful influence upon the individual, although the nature of this influence, and the tools the individual has to respond to it, are differently described by each of them. According to Ian Buchanan the centrality of appropriation in de Certeau's model makes it fundamentally dissimilar to the way Jameson understands space:

> What Jameson's conceptualisation of contemporary society lacks, from a theoretical as well as political point of view, is a plane of articulation that would bring the body into play. It lacks any mechanism of appropriation, and is thus incapable of articulating cultural co-optation.[81]

The spaces of global capital, exemplified by the Bonaventure, are a 'hyperspace' in which the individual cannot map their own position and which therefore rob them of any agency.[82] De Certeau, in creating what Buchanan terms a heterophenomenological subject, perceives space not as an inducer of particular states, but as a composition created by the individual. Action sequences also assert this field of possibility: space is what you make of it, they seem to insist, and do so by 'bring[ing] the body into play'. Purse has shown how such sequences, by featuring an exerting body, work to 'flesh out' the experiences presented, relating the movements of this body to a viewer's own tactile experience. This reciprocal relationship, in this context, works to give the viewer a kind of access to space and spatial agency that they normally lack (or do not mobilise), creating something of a heterophenomenological spectator. They provide the acting out of space that Lefebvre suggests is crucial to the experience of monumental architecture.

These 'actings out' differ from place to place, reflecting the powerfully divergent spatialities that buildings can offer. Both *The International* and *Ghost Protocol* are instructive of the ways sequences respond closely to the particulars of space, rather than being dependent upon 'non-specific backdrops'[83] for their functioning. The Burj

[80] De Certeau, 1988, p. 98.
[81] Buchanan, 1996, p. 115.
[82] Jameson, 1991, p. 44.
[83] Flanagan, 2004, p. 110.

Khalifa is engaged with as a tourist attraction, shots stressing its height (an early helicopter-shot introduction; Hunt's first climb onto the exterior) being employed both to add gravity and excitement to the action but also in accordance with the brand identity of the building as the tallest in the world. The tone of the sequence is also lighter than that of *The International*: occasional visual jokes and spoken asides alleviate the tension, and the music works to evoke a sense of playful fun. While also a tourist destination, the New York Guggenheim is depicted as an unsettling space, the anxiety it creates only increasing once action breaks out, even though this action allows the central character to gain greater spatial knowledge. The tension is high throughout, the sequence emotionally affecting the protagonist prior to, during and after the excitement that takes place there, and the sequence certainly presents the architecture as a plunge into a particular world. Additionally, many shots in the sequence echo the spiralling shape of the interior of the museum or use its curving white walls as strong graphic elements cutting through the image, constantly imposing the particular qualities of the location upon the action itself. That the sequence is set in the Guggenheim is inescapable to the viewer, so prominent and distinctive are its architectural features.

In de Certeau's theory of walking, the walker chooses from the ensemble of opportunities provided by the spatial order, actualising 'only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order', in doing so making them 'exist as well as emerge'.[84] The walker privileges, transforms or abandons those spatial elements that are presented to them. Buchanan has shown how he considers walking, for de Certeau, to be 'a process of *transforming* space, not inhabiting it',[85] but it might be more pertinent to suggest that it is a process of *creating* space, constructing it through movement from the raw material of concrete actualities. The action sequences of *Ghost Protocol* and *The International* create space from the raw material of the iconic structures they feature, actualising a version of that space through filmmaking form and the movement of the onscreen body through space. These places are appropriated through the dynamic operations of both the camerawork and the action protagonist, constructing them as spaces of opportunity, of varying options, rather than as constricting materialities that offer no possibility for agency. Iconic buildings, potentially alienating in their immensity and their strangeness, and seemingly more interested in skyline imageability than human use, are related to the exertions and experiences of bodily movement

[84] De Certeau, 1988, p. 98.
[85] Buchanan, 1996, p. 117, emphasis added.

through action, the protagonist inhabiting them – however fleetingly – in a manner that consequently provides this sensation of inhabitation for the viewer. In de Certeau's words, they can be understood to make space 'habitable, like a rented apartment' by generating brief changes which furnish space 'with their acts and memories'.[86] For de Certeau, the tactics of the individual are defined in part by their imaginative operations, an imagination which fills out and re-tasks the rational and ordered strategies that constrain everyday life.[87] The backdrops of action cinema are imaginatively improvised upon and within by the action protagonist and therefore are appropriated as places of personal involvement and agency, the users 'sign[ing their] existence' as authors upon these spaces.[88]

The intention in this chapter, then, has been to indicate not only that action sequences can depend upon iconic architecture in order to provide brand differentiation in a crowded marketplace, but also to show that action sequences respond strongly to the architectural qualities of the spaces in which they are set, a tendency which has been best illustrated initially through examination of the uses of striking, noteworthy structures like the Bonaventure Hotel, the Burj Khalifa and the Guggenheim New York. *True Lies* responds to the cognitive difficulties presented by the Bonaventure and articulates them by de-contextualising the building in a way that its design seems to solicit (per critical theory); *Ghost Protocol* 'reads' the iconic significations of the Burj Khalifa and communicates them to a blockbuster audience, but also relates the immeasurable structure to human coordinates; *The International* acts out the peculiar spatiality of the Guggenheim and demonstrates the possibility for action sequences to inhabit and appropriate particular spaces.

As Lefebvre makes very clear, '[a]ctivity in space is restricted by that space'.[89] By showing onscreen bodies butting up against those restrictions and occasionally overcoming them, action sequences provide an understanding of the constituents and limitations of contemporary space. Using these concepts of appropriation and bodily engagement, this thesis will proceed to explore further how action sequences reflect and investigate the spaces in which they are set, and how these operations express particular

[86] De Certeau, 1988, p. xxi.
[87] De Certeau, 1988, p. xxiii.
[88] De Certeau, 1988, p. 31.
[89] Lefebvre, 1991, p. 143.

spatial imaginations that are tied to economic and cultural changes in contemporary society. These explorations will build towards a model that seeks to understand the constitutive logics of action sequences and account for their characteristic attention to space.

Chapter 2: Global Space

In his essay 'The State and Society', first published in French in 1964, Henri Lefebvre links the rise of the state as we would recognise it today with the production of spaces designed to facilitate the accretion of financial assets. He describes a process of economic accumulation beginning in Western Europe in the middle ages,

> which has developed and accelerated up until the present, where this accumulation of capital and the means of labor, technology, and knowledge, where this cumulative process becomes irresistible and moreover begins to extend itself over the whole world.[1]

As Lefebvre makes clear in this essay and throughout his work, one of the consequences of these developments is the homogenisation of space on a worldwide scale, as the vast majority of state formations produce similar spaces predicated upon and geared towards capital exchange. As a result all states are violent, are 'born of violence', and act as aggressors towards nature, 'imposing laws upon it and carving it up administratively according to criteria quite alien to the initial characteristics of either the land or its inhabitants'. Since the eighteenth century this state violence has 'enthroned a specific rationality […] – a unitary, logistical, operational and quantifying rationality' that feeds its own growth as it expands to 'take possession of the whole planet'.[2]

State violence, blank corporatism and global homogeneity are, as this chapter will show, tendencies associated with the concept of 'space', as it is used dichotomously with the term 'place', this latter being the subject of the following chapter. Rather than overly-simplistically associating some action sequences and their production of space with the traits of either space or place as they will here be understood, this and the subsequent chapter will examine action sequences from a range of recent films that engage with globalisation and attendant processes of spatial abundance and time-space compression, and which show action protagonists dealing with both the material infrastructure and mental consequences of these processes in varying ways. As has been demonstrated by the previous chapter, action sequences present the appropriation of a regulated space by a physically active body, and map with embodied human coordinates what might otherwise be alienating and disorienting spatialities. In the following analyses of the Bourne trilogy (2002–2007) and *Jumper* (2008) the capacity for action sequences to

[1] Lefebvre, 2009a, p. 56.
[2] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 280.

also represent and depict the appropriation of abstract landscapes of global capital flow will be illustrated. Rather than focus attention on particular sites in the manner of *Mission Impossible – Ghost Protocol* and *The International*, the films examined here direct attention towards the 'unitary, logistical, operational and quantifying rationality' at work in what Lefebvre identifies as contemporary abstract space, which has in these sequences indeed conquered the entire globe.

Throughout *The Bourne Identity* (2002), *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004) and *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007), environments in which the action protagonist moves are depicted as open to constant surveillance, the threat of orchestrated violent incursion never being far away. This ever-present danger forces the protagonist to reduce these spaces to utilitarian spaces-for-use, his heightened awareness of spatial particulars paradoxically working throughout the films to indicate the similarity of these sites of capitalist flow. A large variety of global cities and spaces are shown to be equally open to state control, the user of them forced to efface local differences in order to read these environments for escape routes and weapons. Comparable operations are undertaken in *Jumper*, which elevates a touristic, pleasure-seeking gaze to a position of primacy through its sci-fi teleportation conceit, a conceit which allegorises ideas of spatial abundance and time-space compression. While this might potentially accentuate local difference, the ease of global travel depicted in the film instead makes all spaces equally accessible and frictionless, in this way homogenising London, New York, Chechnya and Egypt into a single playground for a wealthy tourist class. Though different in important ways, both the Bourne trilogy and *Jumper* depict highly interconnected worlds that consist primarily of 'non-places' and de-historicised sites rather than places of meaning and differentiation. In order to show this, the concept of space in critical theory will first be explored.

Space in Critical Theory

The origins of the dominant spatial imagination of the twentieth century, with its foundations of Fordist parcelisation and visual privilege, are traced by many writers to the Enlightenment, a period of intellectual and scientific advances in Europe in the seventeenth century, the central tenets of which have found further expression through the technologies of industrialisation. David Harvey indicates how perceptions of time

and space altered as a result of the voyages of discovery and colonisation during the Renaissance, which were both compelled by and undertaken in response to the potential knowability – and conquerability – of a global space which had itself been brought to light by developing maritime expertise. 'Geographical knowledge became a valued commodity in a society that was becoming more and more profit-conscious'.[3] The Cartesian science of cartography produced maps of territories that were also assumptions of power and mastery over that territory. Exact representations of space, Harvey suggests, 'defined property rights in land, territorial boundaries, domains of administration and social control, communication routes, etc. with increasing accuracy', and in this way facilitated the broadening of markets.[4] Time and space were understood to be recordable, exact and mathematical, a perspective closely tied to economics and production. Knowledge of space, and therefore space itself, became subordinate to logics of exchange.

Lefebvre comes to similar conclusions, tracing the rise of a 'space of accumulation' alongside scientific advancement: 'The accumulation of money for investment, and productive investment itself, are hard to conceive of without a parallel accumulation of technologies and knowledge'.[5] For him, the establishment of the marketplace was productive of an 'abstract and contractual network which bound together the "exchangers" of products and money',[6] the rise of the urban form further ordering space as a site for 'the movement of merchandise, of money and of nascent capital, [...requiring] places of production, boats and cars for transport, ports, storehouses, banks and money-brokers'.[7] As a result, both people and places then become commodities, people reduced to their labour power, and places appreciated principally through their relative value as sites of production, transportation and consumption. This process of value-assignation – which is both intellectual, a scientific rationality instilling an isotropic spatiality as a standard cultural spatial imagination, and economic – is seen by many to *de*value 'place' in its assumption of essential, functional spatial homogeneity.[8] This creates what Lefebvre calls abstract space – a prevailing imagination of space in which it is geometric, visually-oriented and controlled by state systems that back-up

[3] Harvey, 1994, p. 244.
[4] Harvey, 1994, p. 249.
[5] Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 262–263.
[6] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 266.
[7] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 278.
[8] John Agnew, 'The Devaluation of Place in Social Science', in John Agnew & James Duncan (eds), *The Power of Place* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 9–29 (pp. 22–24).

their power with the implied potential for violence in the event of transgression.[9] Space, as the area in which capitalism propagates itself, becomes dominated and controlled, dominating and controlling. It is 'mapped, managed, and manipulated' by state and corporate interests, which are increasingly indistinguishable, and which carve up space with little reference to its lived particulars.[10] Lefebvre considers the inhabitant of such space to be indoctrinated into privileging visual signs above all else. A vehicle driver, for instance, 'perceives only his [*sic*] route, which has been materialized, mechanized and technicized, and he sees it from one angle only – that of its functionality: speed, readability, facility'.[11] Abstract space is a 'homogenous state of affairs':

> a place of confusion and fusion between geometrical and visual which inspires a kind of physical discomfort. Everything is alike. Localization – and lateralization – are no more. Signifier and signified, marks and markers, are added after the fact – as decorations, so to speak. This reinforces, if possible, the feeling of desertedness, and adds to the malaise.[12]

Such space 'tends toward homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities', erasing distinctions.[13]

The precise qualities of abstract space – stated by Lefebvre to be 'highly complex',[14] and thanks to its operation in the negative impossible to reduce to any absolutes (Lefebvre instead offers intimations and theories of this space, themselves often abstract) – can at times be glimpsed, and it is important to note some of the nuances in Lefebvre's descriptions. If abstract space is 'not defined *only* by the disappearance of trees, or by the receding of nature; *nor merely* by the great empty spaces of the state and the military – plazas that resemble parade grounds; *nor even* by commercial centres packed tight with commodities, money and cars', then we can clearly say that these cited spatial features at least form a part of it.[15] Descriptions of it as 'the space of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism'[16] bring to mind shopping malls, highways, and the nexus of capitalist consumption that exists, with little fundamental structural differentiation, throughout the Western world. However, being a spatial concept it would be simplistic and inaccurate to identify a certain building or form as itself being 'abstract space',

[9] Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 285–287.
[10] Brenner & Elden, 2009a, p. 21.
[11] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 313.
[12] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 200.
[13] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 52.
[14] Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 50–51.
[15] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 50, emphasis added.
[16] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 57.

especially if one considers Lefebvre's assertions that analysis of or comments upon abstract space often mistake its intention for its form. As he states, '[a]bstract space *is not* homogenous; it simply *has* homogeneity as its goal, its orientation, its "lens".'[17] Furthermore, abstract space would seem to be potentially reversible: such spaces could become places of meaning and specificity since they are by Lefebvre's definition '*not* homogenous'. Abstract space is itself an abstract idea, not an architectural style. It is also difficult to identify precisely because of its appeal to neutrality and scientific indifference, appeals which nonetheless demonstrate that the space they describe has already fallen under the influence of ruling, capitalistic powers.[18] Moreover, abstract space is global, thanks to the fact that it includes the global within itself and conceives of all space as a potential reservoir of capitalist production.[19]

Many other writers have built upon this model, either explicitly or implicitly, in their own work on contemporary spatiality. In particular, Harvey, Edward S. Casey and Marc Augé extend and expand Lefebvre's argument that the conditions of contemporary globalised capitalism can lead to a waning of investment in specific sites due to the more profitable and widely disseminated framework of homogenous duplicability and standardisation. Whether these writers interpret such processes using the ideas of globalisation or postmodernity, they nonetheless identify similar traits within contemporary imaginations of space, and the impacts these have upon the experience of the individual.

It is generally argued that the increasing speed of travel and communication works to reduce boundaries and manifests a global, or globalised, space. For Harvey, capitalist mechanisms, in their unstoppable drive for increased production and smooth exchange, are 'very much about speed-up and acceleration in the pace of economic processes and, hence, in social life',[20] leading to sensations of time-space compression which alter perceptions of space and time, alterations that have 'material consequences for the ordering of daily life'.[21] Time-space compression provokes not just the capitalist system but also the subject within it to perceive of and experience a variety of spaces as an

[17] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 287, emphasis in original.
[18] Henri Lefebvre, 'Reflections on the Politics of Space', Neil Brenner & Stuart Elden (trans.), in Brenner & Elden (eds), *State, Space, World* (2009b), pp. 167–184 (pp. 170–171).
[19] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 329.
[20] Harvey, 1994, p. 230.
[21] Harvey, 1994, p. 204.

abstract and homogenous mass in order to cope with the increasing profusion of spaces and experiences in social life brought about by an intensified awareness of space on a global scale. These are the conditions under which Fordism becomes post-Fordism, or flexible accumulation. In the latter, it is suggested, capital is unimpeded by national restrictions (which have been undone by deregulation), and so 'roams the globe effortlessly, testimony to the worldwide decline in both technological and regulatory barriers'.[22] Geographical location seems to matter less and less under such an arrangement, since capital, 'being fungible, will continue to try to avoid, and will largely succeed in escaping, the confines of the existing geography' in which it is situated.[23] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri suggest, somewhat like Lefebvre, that this kind of global capitalism allows corporations to turn nation states into 'instruments to record the flows of the commodities, monies, and populations' that are themselves set in motion by the corporations. A global 'Empire' is in this way created, in which older forms of national politics are no longer viable.[24]

Under such conditions it is not only capital and goods but also people that are highly mobile, whether they wish to be or not.[25] Ulrich Beck suggests that settled or staid lives are over: we now live life 'on the road' in a nomadic existence that requires a 'place polygamy' to keep up with our now transnational biographies, biographies that moreover contain these globalised qualities even if they are limited to a particular place – since there now exists an inescapable global consciousness, every location is now a 'multilocation'.[26] This movement – the 'incessant motion of postmodern life in late capitalist societies' – leads Casey to suggest that 'we rarely linger long enough in one particular place to savor its unique qualities and its local history', as a result losing 'places that can serve as lasting scenes of experience and reflection and memory'.[27] Place – synonymous with environments and structures that emphasise reflection and allow for the sedimentation and build-up of meaning and experience – is understood as

[22] Barney Warf, 'From Surfaces to Networks', in Warf & Arias (eds), *The Spatial Turn*, pp. 59–76 (p. 69).
[23] Richard O'Brien, *Global Financial Integration: The End of Geography* (London: Pinter, 1992), p. 2.
[24] Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 31.
[25] There are of course caveats to this generalisation. As Massey states, 'the poor and the unskilled from the so-called margins of this world are both instructed to open up their borders and welcome the West's invasion in whatever form it comes, and told to stay where they are'. The objections of Massey and others to the 'hegemonic story of globalisation' that this chapter outlines will be dealt with in some detail in the next chapter. Massey, 2005, p. 87.
[26] Beck, 2000, pp. 74–75.
[27] Casey, 2009, p. xiii.

increasingly hard to come by, being denuded by Euclidean views of space as a container, a 'homogenous, isotropic, isometric, and infinitely (or, at least, indefinitely) extended' void which makes all places essentially identical cartographic points upon an infinite and abstract grid.[28] The places of lived experience have become akin to the abstract spaces of scientific discourse and capital production as suffered by the '*scattered self* of postmodern society': 'as places enter further into disarray through experiences of diversion and distraction, they verge on an indifferent state that is reminiscent of nothing so much as space'.[29] Or, as Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert put it: 'Globalisation has evicted us from the world we thought we knew'.[30]

The environment that now predominates is evoked by Marc Augé in his anthropological study of 'supermodernity', in which he coins the term 'non-places' for those locations that 'cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity'.[31] Highways, airports and urban zones are typical, but he is clear that the 'possibility of non-place is never absent from any place'.[32] Thanks to the absence of relational meaning, the history or distinctiveness of any particular place can become a spectacle and a commodity, quoted and packaged, 'a status superbly expressed in travel agency catalogues'.[33] The creation of these unhistorical area types is a direct consequence of 'spatial overabundance', as well as the 'overabundance of events' (or temporal overabundance) and 'the individualization of references' in contemporary existence,[34] a trinity of excess that Augé sees as overwhelming the individual, subjecting them to 'entirely new experiences and ordeals of solitude'.[35] The evolution of the non-place is a mechanism for coping with such a torrent of information, incident, and space. It is 'the real measure of our time', extensively linked with the infrastructure of capital and the attendant emphasis on motion and readability.[36]

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[28] Casey, 2009, p. 323. Casey's task for himself is not just to chart this change but more importantly to help push along a cultural 'getting back into place', as his title suggests.
[29] Edward S. Casey, 'Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World?', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91.4 (December 2001), pp. 683–693 (p. 684, emphasis in original).
[30] Buchanan & Lambert, 2005, p. 7.
[31] Augé, 1995, pp. 77–78.
[32] Augé, 1995, p. 107.
[33] Augé, 1995, p. 110.
[34] Augé, 1995, p. 40.
[35] Augé, 1995, p. 93.
[36] Augé, 1995, p. 79. The affinity between Augé's overabundance and Harvey's time-space compression is clear.

In this way these theorists interpret contemporary spatiality as being deeply influenced by technological advances and capitalist processes, the meaning and importance of local places potentially superseded by the unbounded flow of capital in a globally connected world. Place becomes merely a locational tag, a GPS coordinate, all places therefore viewed as equally isometric and thus equally homogenous, local differences effaced by global process. While this is an overly reductive description both of contemporary space and those theories that investigate it, it is an appropriate way of establishing the frames of spatial reference that many action sequences contain.

Frequently global in their scope – a stylistic inherited perhaps from the adventure narratives that they can evoke in their tone and preoccupations – action films nonetheless often depict tight and restricted locations and focus on the struggle of the action protagonist to move and survive in these spaces. In this they manifest concerns regarding efficacious local action in a globally networked world. They may show the workings of abstract space in their representations of worldwide travel undertaken by a wealthy tourist class, but in their action sequences they restore the importance of bodily knowledge to these otherwise alienating spaces. In the Bourne trilogy and *Jumper*, as will now be shown, action sequences present the struggle to enact physical agency within the non-places and multilocations of contemporary everyday life, and demonstrate some of the effects of these kinds of spaces upon personal psychology through the characterisation and actions of their protagonists.

The Bourne Trilogy – A Networked Geography of Threat

In the previous chapter of this thesis extended analyses of *Ghost Protocol* and *The International* indicated that within action sequences space matters a great deal, and that asserting the specificity of a given built environment is a crucial aspect of these sequences. It might then seem paradoxical to use the rubric of ‘space’ and abstract spatial imaginations here, since to do so seems to declare that the spaces of action cinema are homogenous and uninteresting. Contrary to this assumption, this chapter will show how action sequences express the operations and attendant anxieties of frictionless, homogenous abstract spaces, reflecting the particular spatialites of the sites featured just as much as *Ghost Protocol* and *The International*, but doing so in a manner that highlights their similarities and interpenetration by global networks, since these are

precisely the qualities that define the settings in question. Spaces which accord to the lens of abstract space are interrogated by these sequences for the specific, lived, bodily knowledge they provide to the action protagonist in a process that, as will be shown, reveals the impact of processes of globalisation upon the material and mental ordering of socio-spatial life, as expressed both by the spatial engagement of the action protagonist and also by the film itself in its strategies of spatial representation.

A highly influential series of action thrillers, the Bourne trilogy follows an amnesiac government assassin investigating – and trying to escape – his past. The three films develop a filmmaking style of hand-held camerawork and fast cutting which has subsequently become prevalent in mainstream action cinema.[37] In her article on the films, Sue Harris examines the 'anti-touristic idiom'[38] of the franchise and explores how it homogenises spaces through these jittery filmmaking strategies. Seeing the 1970s conspiracy thriller as a principally urban genre, she understands the Bourne trilogy to be an update of such films as *The Parallax View* (1974) and *Three Days of the Condor* (1975), including as it does a similar focus on the correspondences 'between national space and supranational forces'. However, Harris goes on to argue that the spatiality of twenty-first century action thrillers extends the paranoid threat depicted by those thrillers of a quarter-century earlier, reflecting the 'geographical reach, technological capability, and violent potential of [contemporary] globalized systems', systems which threaten to destabilise any sense of individual identity.[39]

The production of spaces for capital exchange therefore threatens to eradicate distinctiveness on a personal level as well as (and in the process of) producing homogenised cities and sites. Harris's analysis itself foregrounds the global nature of the series, each film including long passages in several different major metropolitan areas in Europe and beyond, as well as numerous shorter scenes in an even greater range of locations. For example, *The Bourne Identity* is centered primarily in Zurich, Paris and Langley, but features short clips in, amongst others, Barcelona, Rome,

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[37] David Bordwell terms this style 'unsteadicam': see 'Unsteadicam Chronicles' , *Observations on Film Art*, 17 August 2007a <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2007/08/17/unsteadicam-chronicles/> [accessed 2 August 2012]. In this chapter the first three films of the Bourne franchise, those starring Matt Damon, will be analysed, and for simplicity these will be termed the Bourne trilogy. These films form a dramatic unity and contain a consistency of style that is not exactly matched (nor sought) by the subsequent franchise extension *The Bourne Legacy* (2012).

[38] Harris, 2010, p. 167.

[39] Harris, 2010, pp. 161–162.

Hamburg and the Greek island of Mykonos. For Harris, the depiction of these locations avoids 'the over-determination of screen space generally achieved by classical pictorial composition and codes of exoticism', and instead, through the use of fast cutting and mobile camerawork, the 'dizzying succession of international spaces […] confounds linear narrative logic as well as conventional viewing strategies'. The relationships between the cities in the series are 'based on contingency of action rather than geographical distance': it is the 'momentum of action' that commands the attention of the viewer rather than 'the locations themselves'.[40] In this way, 'spatial content (exotic Asia, major world cities) is overshadowed by dynamic form (rapid editing, handheld camera, multiplication of points of view)',[41] the motivation for the fast-paced style being the constant surveillance of Bourne by his pursuers, surveillance which creates a 'relentlessly hostile environment'.[42] As she concludes,

> For all their iconicity and exoticism, distinct international cityspaces in the [Bourne] films are rendered hyper-legible; they are flattened, in the face of unique cultural markers and national visual cues, into undifferentiated and indistinguishable canvases for the display of material and symbolic violence.[43]

This consistency of style, identified to be a consequence of the narrative of global surveillance, anxious evasion and constant threat, works to turn various places into a mostly undifferentiated global space, open to monitoring by those with the right access to the right equipment.[44] This is synonymous with Lefebvre's description of abstract space, which 'tends toward homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences' in order to create a frictionless space through which capital and people can move, and markets can function.[45] This abstract space seeks not just to erase distinctions but to actively create momentum, commodity capitalism being predicated on 'circulation and flow'.[46] As result, abstract space dissuades loitering and undermines any attempts to physically or emotionally invest in particular places.

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[40] Harris, 2010, p. 165.
[41] Harris, 2010, p. 167.
[42] Harris, 2010, p. 165.
[43] Harris, 2010, p. 171.
[44] This flattening occurs at a level beyond just the films themselves: as John Hazelton reports, the advertising of *The Bourne Ultimatum* focused on 'character, story and action' because 'attempting to leverage international locations is a "red herring from a marketing standpoint"'. He is quoting David Kosse, president of Universal Pictures International. John Hazelton, 'Marketing: The Bourne Ultimatum', *ScreenDaily*, 3 August 2007 <http://www.screendaily.com/marketing-the-bourne-ultimatum/4033875.article> [accessed 8 August 2011].
[45] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 52.
[46] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 337.

Within action sequences throughout the trilogy (as well as the narrative in general) these traits of Lefebvre's abstract space are continually asserted, while in his outlook and actions Jason Bourne deploys these self-same strategies for the purpose of survival. Spaces are continually shown to be exposed to and penetrated by a global surveillance network that also has the power to enact change (through violent incursion) in the spaces surveyed; in the action sequences, Bourne deploys as a response his own tactics of spatial homogenisation and scopic mastery. He sees all spaces as potentially threatening, constantly reading them for traces of disturbance much in the same way that the corrupt state infrastructure hunting him does. For instance, after entering the US Embassy in Zurich in *The Bourne Identity*, he scans the room for information, clearly anxious. This turns out to be prescient, as he is soon attacked by security personnel. Disabling them, he moves hastily but calmly through the building, removing a fire evacuation plan from the wall to use as a map, and taking a radio from a guard. He reduces the building to a schematic in order to escape it, a process he undertakes throughout the trilogy, his movements accompanied by handheld camerawork that emphasises not any particular spatial qualities but rather the need of the action protagonist to progress through space at speed. There is little sense of relief after such a sequence, only a sensation that Bourne must keep moving before his assailants have an opportunity to regroup. In this sequence the surveillance in the embassy is linked to other networks of surveillance throughout Zurich (in banks, on streets), meaning that even the American flag and the promise of American soil do not denote safety for Bourne (who does not yet know he is a hunted spy), or even a separate space in any meaningful sense.

As Lefebvre makes clear, though contemporary space has 'an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be "purely" formal, the essence of rational abstraction', this is in fact only because it 'has already been occupied and planned, already the focus of past strategies, of which we cannot always find traces'.[47] Instrumental devices of surveillance, violence and eviction have moreover been built into this colonised space in manner that disguises their presence under the guise of functionalism. The action sequences of the Bourne trilogy reveal these normally hidden devices. They also provide the compensatory sight of successful, if harried, navigation through them. By contrasting the efforts of the individual caught

[47] Lefebvre, 2009b, p. 170.

within networks of late capitalist space with the operations of those monitoring the space action sequences manifest the dichotomy of personal tactics and depersonalised strategies explored in the previous chapter, and furthermore reveal how such strategies depend upon homogenisation and restrictions placed upon possible actions in space, restrictions Bourne reveals through overcoming them.

In *The Bourne Ultimatum*, a sequence pits Bourne against several CIA agents in London's Waterloo Station as he gleans information from a newspaper reporter while also trying to protect him from assassination. In addition to this, Bourne attempts (ultimately fruitlessly) to hide his identity from the many surveillance devices operating throughout the space. Filmed on location, and in part amongst real crowds who were not made aware of their inclusion as extras in a major Hollywood production, the sequence continues director Paul Greengrass's commitment to keeping the Bourne films 'on the streets', avoiding the 'sanitised spaces' of a film set or a fully locked-down location (as he states on his commentary for the Region 2 DVD). More than this, the sequence highlights the homogenisation depicted and dramatised by the trilogy, and shows how panopticism is used to construct contemporary spaces.

Despite Waterloo Station being close geographically to such touristic icons as the London Eye and the south bank of the Thames river, the sequence avoids showing these, focusing instead upon individuals and their immediate environment, as is typical of the franchise (brief overhead helicopter shots point straight down at the station, and so avoid reference to wider London iconography). In this and other ways the film depicts spaces that are both highly specific but also homogenous and undifferentiated, icons of geographical placement eschewed in favour of everyday functional elements of the city's infrastructure. Waterloo Station, though noted by the film for its busyness, centrality, and connection to Europe (the Eurostar train terminal was at the time of the film's production and release situated there), is shown in the manner in which it is experienced by Bourne himself, and even commuters who use it on a daily basis: as an obstacle of people and timing to be hastily overcome, not an iconic London building. Neither he nor the viewer are afforded moments in which to become accustomed to the location, as Ethan Hunt and Louis Salinger were in *Ghost Protocol* and *The International* respectively. Instead, filmmaking strategies position the viewer with Bourne's situation by emulating his traits of hyper-awareness and clipped movement,

working to render the unique qualities of the space irrelevant.[48] As a result it becomes a series of doors, corridors and cameras understood through a militarised language of geometric location.[49]

Since large metropolitan train stations are designed to accelerate throughput with the minimum amount of resistance, the contents of the space and the modes of monitoring it are as vital, if not more so, than the particulars of the architecture. Bourne directs reporter Simon Ross through the crowds and blends into them himself to avoid detection. He requires the ambiguity of the crowd, and the busyness of the space is posited as its central attribute both in dialogue and shooting style. Individuals (Bourne, Ross, the pursuing agents) converge in the busy concourse and soon become muddled in the mass of people, lost by the elevated security cameras and the CIA controllers monitoring them in New York. They move from here to empty corridors behind the central space, at which point latent violence explodes into actual combat; however, without the crowd Bourne is easily singled out and identified by the CIA. Finally, attempting to disappear once again into the mass of people, Ross is gunned down as he re-enters public space.[50]

Urban anonymity is best maintained by moving through the crowd, the camerawork and editing highlighting this, hand-held shots picking Bourne or other characters up for brief moments before losing them again. The fast cutting of snatched moments of action and dialogue is echoed by the surveillance techniques of the pursuers themselves, many of whom brandish handheld digital cameras. These images are fed to the CIA control room and shown, rapidly intercut, on monitors around the room in a choppy style that reflects that of the film itself. This detail indicates how the twinned drives of panoptic mastery and spatial homogenisation are ingrained within both Bourne and his pursuers, both subject and state apparatus, and therefore form the fundamental aesthetic of the trilogy.

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[48] On this sequence, its treatment of the location and of Bourne's psychology, see Steven Peacock, 'The Collaborative Film Work of Greengrass and Damon: A Stylistic State of Exception', *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 9.2+3 (2011), pp. 147–160 (p. 153).

[49] This is indicated by the abstract, instrumentalist spatial directions provided by Bourne: 'stay on that line', 'move along the far wall', 'proceed out the east exit – that's to your right', etc.

[50] Harris identifies the importance of advertising as a device for concealing assassins/surveyors in the franchise. Harris, 2010, p 166. It can be added that the adverts glimpsed in the Waterloo Station sequence are for a music library provided by a mobile phone network, and a Mastercard billboard from behind which an assassin fires. The former stresses assets of instantaneity and mastery through digital means (qualities shared by the CIA), while the latter – a silhouette of Tower Bridge with the words 'Navigating your way through London: Priceless' – contrasts Bourne's urgent way-finding with a touristic, consumer-driven idiom alien to him.

David Bordwell has written about the consistency of this 'run-and-gun' style throughout the three films – even for scenes which do not feature action or Bourne himself – and sees it as a weakness, yielding as it does 'visceral impact' but not necessarily 'immersion'.[51] In spatial terms, however, this uniformity of style should be understood to standardise all environments into spaces of latent threat, be they large transport hubs, small apartments, or corporate offices. The unsteady camera and its constant cutting reflect the prompts to circulation that Lefebvre has identified in contemporary urban space. It also helps to efface difference according to the lens of homogeneity, decorations and markers being added 'after the fact'[52] (such as onscreen titles announcing the geographical location[53]) and doing little to differentiate what is a globally conceived, and so globally threatening, system of spatial production, depicted in a uniformly anxious filmmaking style. The style reflects Bourne's own experience of space, and his capacity to review and classify space instantly according to its possible uses for his own survival – his treatment of it as 'materialized, mechanized and technicized'[54] – is a symptom of his own mental conditioning at the hands of the CIA. He is a product of the state just as much as the threatening spaces in which he moves, and so operates according to similar logics.

For Lefebvre, a key constituent of contemporary space is the centralisation of knowledge and power:

> we now have the means to gather all knowledge and information, no matter how close or how far away its source may be, at a single point where it can be processed; data collection and computer science abolish distance, and they can confidently ignore a materiality scattered across space (and time).[55]

The CIA control rooms in this sequence and throughout the franchise are the epitome of this data collection. Though not present in the spaces they monitor, these sites impact upon the subjects within those spaces. Michel Foucault has written influentially about the way architecture controls and disciplines behaviour, the most effective arrangement for such conditioning being the model of the panopticon, which Foucault takes from

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[51] David Bordwell, 'Insert Your Favorite Bourne Pun Here', *Observations on Film Art*, 30 August 2007b <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2007/08/30/insert-your-favorite-bourne-pun-here/> [accessed 27 September 2011].
[52] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 200.
[53] These are mysteriously absent from the Region 2 DVD releases of *Identity* and *Ultimatum*, but were present in the cinematic presentations.
[54] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 313.
[55] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 334.

Jeremy Bentham and expands into a generalised function of disciplinary society.[56] Foucault's words on the panoptic arrangement of society evokes the surveillance apparatus depicted in the Bourne trilogy, as he describes the panopticon as an 'uninterrupted play of calculated gazes'[57] producing 'a locus of convergence for everything that must be known', operating through networks and geometry, tied to economic process.[58] Lefebvre in his own work shows how this logic works to make spaces similar through the production of 'virtually identical "cells"' for the containment and classification of people and goods, which are themselves inevitably endowed with exchange value and made into commodities.[59] For Bourne as for subjects in the panopticon, '[v]isibility is a trap'.[60] Both surveillance and the networks of connection it implies work to efface difference and to homogenise the immediate environment. Abstraction is a guiding principle both of space and of successful negotiation of that space by a subject, a quality of contemporary existence that the three films highlight. Simon Ross operates as a contrast to Bourne in the Waterloo Station sequence, his abstraction and surveillance faulty: he mistakes a bin-man for an assassin, then runs into the line of fire of a sniper, things Bourne warns him against doing. Unable to read the space successfully, Ross is killed.

Ross attempts to circulate knowingly, but fails. Bourne does so effectively, but a consequence of this is that he is denied the possibility of standing still, of putting down any kind of roots. Bourne's attempts to find a location for reflection and investment are always frustrated by the actions of those hunting him. It has been noted above that Casey terms 'rushing' and 'incessant motion' to be typical of a postmodern experience of space, and the result of this mobility is a 'loss of places that can serve as lasting scenes of experience and reflection and memory'.[61] Bourne exemplifies this, being an amnesiac with no safe place to pause. In *The Bourne Supremacy*, having experienced a flashback to one of his forgotten kills in a Berlin hotel room, he is forced to flee, exiting the hotel through a window and dodging police on the streets and in the Friedrichstrasse

[56] Foucault, 1991, pp. 200–228.
[57] Foucault, 1991, p. 177.
[58] Foucault, 1991, p. 173. Foucault is clear that the panoptic mode is internal as much as external: 'He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection' (Foucault, 1991, pp. 202–203).
[59] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 337.
[60] Foucault, 1991, p. 200.
[61] Casey, 2009, p. xiii.

railway station. The beginning of the chase is intercut with CIA agents entering the hotel to investigate: 'What the hell was he doing here?' one asks, to which another replies 'Maybe he just wanted to stay the night.' This line, with its sarcastic yet sympathetic tone, underscores the life of constant movement to which Bourne is subjected.

If we understand place, as does Thomas Gieryn, to be an attachment to an environment 'result[ing] from accumulated biographical experiences […and therefore associated] with the fulfilling, terrifying, traumatic, triumphant, secret events that happened to us personally there', [62] then it is clear that in this Berlin hotel room Bourne briefly finds a place. Perhaps ironically, certainly appropriately, this endowment of meaning occurs in that most transitory of dwellings and is instantly lost.[63] Bourne's subsequent knowledge of transportation infrastructure allows him to utilise the Berlin metro to evade capture, as he scans the metro timetable during the following footchase and uses the information to escape. Place – the room that prompted his traumatic memories – is quickly jettisoned for the anonymity of the semiotically coded, carefully regimented urban spaces of movement and flow.

Other instances in which a brief respite from movement is denied are numerous throughout the franchise. In *The Bourne Identity* a Parisian apartment is shown to be an airy, silent, bland place, pregnant with tension. Bourne looks for clues to his identity while his companion Marie attempts to take a shower, but there is little relief in these moments as it becomes increasingly clear that the calm will soon be punctured. Bourne's movements through each room establish their parameters in preparation for the fight that occurs when another assassin smashes through a window, but more than this they emphasise the stillness and immobility of the apartment, qualities that are stifling thanks to their inevitable brevity.

Similar dynamics are in play throughout *The Bourne Supremacy*. Having gone "off grid" with Marie, both now living unobtrusive lives on a beach in Goa, the machinations of CIA agents bring violence to this idyllic existence, an action sequence

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[62] Thomas Gieryn, 'A Space for Place in Sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), pp. 463–496 (p. 481).

[63] As Casey phrases it, '[i]s not a room in a hotel the very essence of transiency, of *not* dwelling somewhere, of merely passing through on one's way to somewhere else?' (Casey, 2009, p. 114, emphasis in original).

erupting once Bourne's anonymity and global disconnection are undermined. Later in the second film, in a flat in Munich, Bourne and another assassin again only explode into combat once the paralysing airlessness of the over-clean living space has been stressed at length in a sequence that mirrors the one found in Paris in *Identity*. This denial of dwelling should be seen as the domestic side of the 'relentlessly hostile [global] environment' Harris has shown that the films create.[64] Throughout the trilogy all such domestic spaces become a part of an inescapable network of surveillance and violence, a network that also takes in banks, offices, embassies, cafés and all strata of transport infrastructure.[65] This external mobility, the bridging of time and space instantly by technologies of travel and communication, generates in Bourne an inner mobility, a restlessness which Beck suggests is 'no longer the exception but the rule', and is produced as a response to the overwhelmingly linked multilocations that we now move within.[66] Though Beck suggests this is merely a result of globalisation, and should not be stigmatised, the Bourne trilogy reveals the troubling consequences of such mobility for both the de-located psyche and the spatial experience it engenders.

Harris is clear that, for all the globetrotting on display, in the films 'all world cities eventually resemble each other; the experience of the next is a variation on the encounter with the last'.[67] The same is true of the films themselves, not just the cities they feature, as the action sequences offer minor variations on consistent scenarios. Fight sequences and chase scenes are repeated, with minimal difference, in the three films, the different locations having little impact upon the structure, logics and pleasures of these sequences. Greengrass points out on his Region 2 DVD commentary for *Ultimatum* that the New York car chase in that film is deliberately halting and staccato, compared with the more propulsive speed-oriented car chase in Moscow in *Supremacy*. Yet both scenes feature Bourne commandeering an iconic non-public vehicle (a police car and a taxicab respectively) and outmaneuvering police officials as well as a rival assassin as he runs a gauntlet to reconcile an aspect of his past life. The similarities

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[64] Harris, 2010, p. 165.

[65] As a counterpoint, the films present water as the only escape from such networks. Adrift in the opening moments of *Identity*, Bourne is totally unknown, even to himself. He and Marie seek refuges in spaces near the water in *Identity* (a Greek Island) and *Supremacy* (a beach in Goa). Bourne survives to fight another day by submerging himself in the Hudson River in New York at the end of *Ultimatum*. A non-space in the sense that it contains no distinguishing features and is not produced by capitalist systems, the shifting, anonymous mass of the ocean seems the only alternative to the undifferentiated surveillance networks of postmodernity.

[66] Beck, 2000, p. 75.

[67] Harris, 2010, p. 171.

outweigh the differences, and the importance of the specific urban setting is minimised, despite the emphasis on location shooting. The same is true of the fights in Paris and Munich in *Identity* and *Supremacy* respectively, which are highly similar. Rather than imply that locations do not matter in action sequences, that they are blank canvasses, these similarities instead assert Bourne's need to flatten the space in which he moves into an abstraction in order to survive.

Casey credits the concept of place with the power to 'direct and stabilize us, to memorialize and identify us, to tell us who and what we are in terms of *where we are'*.[68] By denuding place of its power of specificity or uniqueness, and making all places (public and domestic) into a global space of potential surveillance and violence, the Bourne series removes stabilisation, memorialisation and identification. Its amnesiac protagonist, despite sharing other action protagonist's abilities to 'get *behind* the surfaces' of post-Fordist, late capitalist spaces,[69] is trapped in a homogenous environment of abstract space, an interconnected panoptic network that denies any lingering personal spatial investment. He is, moreover, an emblematic product of this space, being robbed of memory, history and the capacity to dwell, reduced by others to his commodity-value (another character describes him as a 'malfunctioning $30 million weapon' rather than a human being). The action sequences express this tendency most clearly of all. Though Bourne commands space through superior knowledge and physical skill during these moments, his control is only temporary, and is predicated precisely upon his fleeting presence. Like the action protagonists of *Ghost Protocol* and *The International*, Bourne tactically appropriates spaces of strategic control. However, his inhabitations are brief, and work to underscore a consistent spatial experience of anxiety and threat rather than highlighting the spatial qualities of any particular environment and the thrill of engaging with it. Unable to root himself within place, the action sequences of the Bourne trilogy reveal what little command of space can be achieved within the global nexus of interconnected panoptic sites presented by the films, and the need for the subject within this environment to resort to similar strategies of spatial homogenisation, personal anonymity and latent violence in order to survive. In this, the action sequences reflect the particular spatiality of those environments produced under the dictates of abstract space.

[68] Casey, 2009, p. xv, emphasis in original.
[69] Pfeil, 1998, p. 173, emphasis in original.

Jumper – A Touristic Geography of Sites

Jumper resembles the Bourne trilogy not only in its comparable narrative of a persecuted but capable individual pitted against a secretive agency, but also in its emphasis upon global accessibility and the spatial standardisation that can arise as a result of time-space compression.[70] A global teen-thriller with a science-fiction twist, the film concerns David Rice, a teenager endowed – seemingly at random – with the ability to teleport instantly around the world. David and those like him are pursued by a group of religious zealots called the Paladins who believe such powers to be an abomination. Openly indebted to the comic book hero narrative style, the film avoids depicting the machinations of the networks of vested interests it presents (David's mother is apparently the head of the Paladins) and instead focuses upon the protagonist's attempts to romance and then protect his childhood sweetheart. It features two principal action sequences: the first in the Coliseum in Rome, and the second – the finale – occurring in a multitude of sites across the globe. Between them, these two sequences indicate the operations and consequences of touristic ways of visualising space. The film's conclusion forcefully suggests that in the contemporary world all places can be reduced to 'sites' lacking complex meaning-investment and politics. Unlike the anxious homogenisation of the Bourne trilogy – a result of constant threat and surveillance – the touristic global accessibility of *Jumper* works to emphasise the openness and consumability of spaces, even if it paradoxically generates the same sensations of anxiety regarding accessibility and standardisation.

The destruction of spatial boundaries and the creation of near-instant flow is a feature not just of *Jumper* but of capitalism itself, a system that seeks to annihilate space through time in the drive towards instantaneous commodity turnover. As Neil Smith clearly states,

> Inherent in capital is the desire to reduce the time and costs of circulation so that the expanded capital can be returned more quickly to the sphere of production and accumulation can proceed more rapidly.[71]

This process is not so much an effect of capitalist modernisation but rather a specific necessity of this mode of production. As a result, the individual is required to 'cope

[70] It shares director Doug Liman with *The Bourne Identity*, and is a similar but less successful attempt to launch a contemporary franchise.
[71] Smith, 1991, p. 93.

with an overwhelming sense of *compression* of our spatial and temporal worlds' as distances become easier to cross thanks to advances in communication and transportation.[72] Instantaneity forces new perceptual methods upon the subject experiencing this compression. Fredric Jameson suggests that this leads to a premium being placed 'on briefing and instant recognition',[73] evidence of what he cuttingly calls 'the triumphant achievement of the kind of standardization and conformity feared and fantasized in the 1950s but now clearly no longer a problem for the people successfully molded by it'.[74] For Jameson, what was once a fear of superficiality is now an achieved dream of instant informational gratification. This has important consequences not just for personal experience but also global politics, as 'the settled history of nations [becomes] a flux of transitory media representations, while citizenship is overshadowed and overcome by contemporaneity'.[75]

The simultaneity produced by an increasingly networked global environment makes a greater range of spatial experiences accessible; as a result, and due to the importance of attracting the attention of consumers and capital investment, differentiation becomes necessary, but also contingent on the provision of essentials which are accessible at a global scale. While local difference may appear to be valorised in contemporary tourist travel, for instance, it is also vital that these localities offer the commodities, safety and comforts that are on offer elsewhere (a paradox previously hinted at during discussion of the spectacular but bland spatial experience of the Burj Khalifa in *Ghost Protocol*). Augé suggests that this drive toward homogeneity is a contributing cause of non-places, the 'spatial overabundance'[76] of supermodernity leading to the commodification of places in a process that he considers to reach its apotheosis in travel agency catalogues.[77] Euclidean models of space are involved in this conceptualisation, since they explicitly define space as isotropic: a plane of coordinates which are identical and demarcated only by manufactured local properties of distinction. The accessibility and increasing uniformity of global space is therefore yoked to scientific knowledge procedures, themselves working on behalf of capital expansion and efficiency. Michael

[72] Harvey, 1994, p. 240, emphasis in original.
[73] Jameson, 1991, p. 146.
[74] Jameson, 1991, p. 366.
[75] Tim Luke & Gearóid Ó Tuathail, 'Thinking Geopolitical Space: The Spatiality of War, Speed and Vision in the Work of Paul Virilio', in Mike Crang & Nigel Thrift (eds), *Thinking Space* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 360–379 (p. 377).
[76] Augé, 1995, p. 40.
[77] Augé, 1995, p. 110.

J. Dear and Steven Flusty are indicative in their description of the mobility inherent in the contemporary economic environment:

> Any step in the productive process can be relocated regionally, nationally, and even globally with comparative ease, thus destabilizing localities as firms exercise the capacity to readily and quickly jettison particular peoples and places from productive operations.[78]

The mobility of capital begets its immediate departure from areas that prove unproductive, creating as a byproduct a culture of instant attraction.

This accelerated throughput, in conjunction with alienated labour in post-Fordist structures, makes a touristic and consumptive gaze the primary mode of being-in-the-world. The teleporters in *Jumper* are representative of this: able to abandon a place once it no longer entertains them, they roam the globe looking for quick, easy entertainments. They are markers of how stability has been replaced by flux and commodification in the shift from Fordism to flexible accumulation. The protagonist's lifestyle privileges consumer goods and instant personal gratification. David is able to change his surroundings as easily as he can change the channel on his large flatscreen television, and as a consequence these surroundings are consistently touristic. This mode of being is further stressed by his reliance upon tourist postcards – which fill every wall of his apartment – to activate his teleportation.

For David, then, the world is a collection of iconic sights and sites to be consumed in the manner of TV channel surfing. Greater access to space means a lessening of investment in place. In this, *Jumper* presents globalisation in the same manner as Lefebvre, who describes it as a 'mode of withdrawal', witnessed by an armchair spectator who 'becomes globalized, but as an eye, purely and simply'. This is for Lefebvre

> a new modality of looking: a social gaze which rests on the image of things but which is reduced to powerlessness, the possession of a false consciousness, quasi-knowledge and non-participation. Without seeing that it is doing so, this gaze banishes real knowledge, real power and real participation.[79]

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[78] Michael Dear & Steven Flusty, 'From the Politics of Urban Place to a Politics of Global Displacement', in Michael Dear & Steven Flusty (eds), *The Spaces of Postmodernity: Readings in Human Geography* (London: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 363–367 (pp. 363–364).

[79] Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume II: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*, John Moore (trans.) (London & New York: Verso, 2002), pp. 89–90.

This kind of gaze is a consequence of time-space compression and the new possibilities of transportation and communication in a globalised world. Not just air travel but the internet, satellite television and container shipping are all manifestations of the constant travelling undertaken, experienced and relied upon by many of us today, leading individuals to avoid lingering anywhere 'long enough to be more than visitors': 'Wherever we happen to be at the moment, we cannot help knowing that we could be elsewhere, so there is less and less reason to stay anywhere in particular'.[80] Such an existence is for Zygmunt Bauman an existence in *time*. Crucially, this is the privilege of a group he calls tourists, the polarisation of late capitalism also creating a class of vagabonds: individuals whose movements are restricted, and who are therefore condemned to an existence in *space*.

The life of the tourist is intimately bound up with consumerism and its dominance in the current world order (following, for Bauman, the preceding dominance of production in the early twentieth century). Instantaneity and consumerism go hand in hand, and between them produce a superficial and touristic approach to existence:

> There is a natural resonance between the spectacular career of the 'now', brought about by time-compressing technology, and the logic of consumer-oriented economy […]. The needed time-reduction [in consumption] is best achieved if consumers cannot hold their attention or focus their desire on any object for long; if they are impatient, impetuous and restive, and above all easily excitable and equally easily losing interest.[81]

For Bauman, the tourist/consumer – a person 'on the move and bound to remain so' – has been indoctrinated into an existence of the ever-stressed present for the purpose of the constant consumption of global pleasures.[82] Feelings of insecurity, loneliness and restlessness are an unavoidable consequence. Though mobile and in motion the tourist's life is founded upon a kind of unease, precisely because this mobility is unrelenting. As Lefebvre suggests in *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, consumer goods are above all signs rather than things, these signs being consumed rather than the products they signify.

> How then can frustration and disappointment be avoided if people have nothing more substantial than signs to get their teeth into? Adolescents today want to

[80] Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 77.
[81] Bauman, 1998, pp. 81–82.
[82] Bauman, 1998, p. 85.

> consume now, at once, and such a market has been duly and effectively exploited.[83]

The same is true of space, which is controlled by systems of equivalence for capitalist ends. It may contain '[f]utile effects of difference, understood scornfully as aesthetic (variations in color and form)', but in Lefebvre's eyes these do little to interrupt its essential monotony.[84]

For Jason Bourne, the incessant presentness and worldwide scale of this kind of capitalist space is a source of anxiety and constant threat. Though similarly hounded by security organisations, David's restlessness originates in a desire for gratification rather than a need to escape attack and detection. However, the profusion of spaces in the film and their demonstrated accessibility highlights the frictionless and ephemeral aspects of globalised space as much as the Bourne trilogy highlighted the homogeneity of global capitalist infrastructure. *Jumper* still inculcates the logic of Lefebvre's abstract space, reducing local difference to visual signification, depicting a unified world saturated by the operations of commodity exchange. For both protagonists, the immediate space of lived experience is instantly readable and reducible, while on a global scale the world is perceived as a linked system in which all points are equally and instantly accessible. The action sequences of *Jumper* focus upon these traits of contemporary space and the way they are dealt with by the film's protagonist.

In the first action sequence, the Coliseum in Rome is represented as a symbol of touristic pleasure. David's girlfriend Millie has always wanted to see it but, not being endowed with the ability to teleport, has yet to sate this desire, instead living a 'vagabond' life stuck working in a bar in her home town. Upon flying to Rome David and Millie are frustrated to find the Coliseum closing for the day; however, David uses his power to open locked doors from the inside and illegally leads Millie into the heart of the building. David's consumption of the sights it offers is instantaneous, and he persists in moving deeper and deeper into the structure, ignoring signs indicating such areas are off limits. In the hypogeum – the exposed cells and tunnels beneath what was the arena floor – David is forced into combat by the arrival of both a fellow jumper

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[83] Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, Sacha Rabinovitch (trans.) (New York, Evanston, San Francisco & London: Harper & Row, 1971b), p. 91.
[84] Henri Lefebvre, 'Space and Mode of Production', Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner & Stuart Elden (trans.), in Brenner & Elden (eds), *State, Space, World* (2009c), pp. 210–222 (p. 213).

named Griffin and two armed Paladins. The sequence is constructed from brief and restricted location shooting at the Coliseum and more extensive work on a sound-stage recreation of the hypogeum. It highlights the specificity of the environment, but does so to indicate how restriction to a single place is a source of potential danger.

A tourist icon, but also a building with a clear sense of place and history, the Coliseum is utilised as an arena of conflict. It should be termed a 'place', particularly following Augé, as it is 'relational', 'historical' and 'concerned with identity'.[85] An attempt at inhabitation is made as David must understand and control the particularities of the place in order to survive the attack. Though commodified as a site of touristic pleasure (in both the film and contemporary culture), the Coliseum retains its historical function as a staged battleground, and is briefly dynamised as a site with meaning and historical memory *in addition* to being seen as a site of visual consumption, the two purposes co-existent. This situatedness in time and space is not sought by David though, and induces pain and anxiety in the form of the electronic charges that the Paladins use to ground him in one location, preventing him from escaping.

The concluding action sequence of the film operates as a contrast to this brief assertion of place, staging as it does a teleportation battle in multiple global locations, and is more in keeping with the film's depiction of accessible global space. David and Griffin elude Paladins and scramble for control of an explosive device, in doing so creating a continuous space spanning the entire world through their teleportation, epitomising processes of time-space compression. The continuous nature of the action means that the film does not deploy jump cuts in the traditional sense, but rather shows global space as interconnected and simultaneous, a unified milieu through which the protagonists can move with ease. David and Griffin appear in an environment for two or three brief shots lasting only four or five seconds in total, long enough (but only just) for the comprehension of where they are through the recognition of touristic cues. London – previously depicted by the film as a city of Big Ben, rain, and Irish bars the likes of which can increasingly be found anywhere – is now used as a place to pick up a trademark Routemaster bus and teleport it to the desert to use as a weapon. A sweeping helicopter shot shows a fist-fight atop the Pyramids of Giza; abruptly, the protagonists are running along a Shanghai motorway, then along a beach, the Dubai skyline and

[85] Augé, 1995, p. 77.

signature Burj Al Arab hotel in the background; then, in a tussle on a pavement in tight handheld shots, enough wider context is glimpsed to reveal that the setting is Times Square, New York City. These locations are moved through at immense speed, and depicted in a touristic mode that emphasises the iconicism and consumability of sites even as it disregards meaningful inhabitation of them. These unique local places are flattened into settings for superficial quotation and instant (pleasurable) recognition.

Different cities, nations and icons are here deployed in a desperate, kinetic drive for escape and consumption, a series of unfinished experiences aiming at total control. This depiction of instantaneous global travel as a compilation of de-historicised sites is an allegorical representation of the logics of twenty-first century tourism, which turns places into sites of spectacle to be consumed by the globally mobile.[86] As Stephen Williams notes in his book *Tourism Geography*, there is a certain irony in the fact that 'tourism – which by tradition has been widely represented as a quest for difference – has become one of the most influential agents in promoting placelessness and homogeneity in some of its main destination areas'.[87] Appealing to image and consumption, tourism has come to signify ephemerality and depthlessness rather than fulfilling contingent experiences with other cultures and places. The comforting, pre-packaged sites offered by contemporary tourism work to calm the anxiety that an individual may feel regarding the increasing openness and awareness of space and culture on a global scale.[88] The availability of spaces (and experiences) offered by time-space compression encourages facile representations and half-finished experiences rather than genuine interaction and spatial engagement; consumable visual representation rather than engaged lived experience. Tourism is an acute indication of how, in the words of Lefebvre, alienation and commodification have 'turn[ed] the world into a caricature of itself'.[89] For him, the touristic landscape makes space legible in an inauthentic but calming manner. This produces

[86] See on this, Augé, 1995, p. 110.
[87] Stephen Williams, *Tourism Geography: A New Synthesis*, 2nd edn (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 185.
[88] This is described by Tim Oakes & Claudio Minca, in 'Tourism, Modernity, and Postmodernity', in Alan A. Lew, C. Michael Hall & Allen M. Williams (eds), *A Companion to Tourism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 280–290 (pp. 284–285).
[89] Lefebvre, 2002, p. 91.

> the archetypal touristic delusion of being a participant [in the landscape...], and of understanding it completely, even though the tourist merely passes through a country or countryside and absorbs its image in a quite passive way.[90]

The concrete reality of place is 'obscured and indeed consigned to oblivion' by this self-deluding gaze.[91] Local culture is radically simplified and experienced by the tourist in a state of distraction rather than contemplation.[92]

The teleportation conceit around which *Jumper* is constructed gives its protagonists the ability to instantly sample the site-specific delights of a given place (surfing in Fiji and coffee in Paris within seconds of each other), and so removes the contingencies and experiences of the processes of travelling and dwelling in any particular place. In this way it cuts its protagonists off from the fabrics of local life and social existence, presenting instead a comfortable, consequence-free global playground of touristic visual commodity consumption. The global chase that concludes the film develops the frenetic consequences of this mobile mode of being. The hectic cutting between global environments indicates not that this sequence is unconcerned with spatial particulars, but rather demonstrates the impossibility of a meaningful engagement with space when operating in such a touristic manner. This action sequence is just as much focused upon the experience of space in the contemporary world as any other, but rather than concentrate upon a single location it indicates how globalisation has itself made the world into a vast single location, full knowledge of which is impossible, despite the radical simplifications and commodifications of the tourist gaze. Spatial acclimatisation and the fleeting appropriation and personalisation of space, the kinds of which were shown to be crucial determinants of action sequences in analyses of *Ghost Protocol* and *The International*, are here notable by their absence. Being tourists, David and Griffin cannot acclimatise, only visually consume and hastily move on. Like Bourne, they are unable to put down any roots, the creation of a worldwide space through the process of time-space compression working to massively reduce their investment in places, which

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[90] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 189.
[91] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 189.
[92] This understanding of contemporary tourism as rootless and un-implaced is common enough that Gareth Shaw and Allen M. Williams, in *Tourism and Tourism Spaces*, urge their readers to keep in mind the fact that tourism is bound up with many other forms of movement, and is 'intricately woven into the fabrics of daily lives, the constitution of communities, and the functioning of social and natural systems' (Gareth Shaw & Allan M. Williams, *Tourism and Tourism Spaces* (London: Sage, 2004), p. 2). In this way they warn against precisely the simplification of the tourist experience that *Jumper* depicts. See also on this subject, John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd edn (London: SAGE, 2002), pp. 7–12; and Williams, 2009, pp. 197–198.

instead become pseudo-places: barely differentiated nodes of a global network, equally accessible and equally disposable.[93]

This results in a dangerous absence of politics. The sequence concludes with David and Griffin jumping into a Chechnyan warzone ('I hate Chechnya', Griffin comments helpfully as he stumbles out of the path of an oncoming tank), the two of them caught in the midst of a firefight involving armoured vehicles and constant explosions. The driver of a vehicle Griffin teleports into in the midst of the battle seems to be crushed by a tank without comment. The wider combat then seems to result in the collapse of a large electricity pylon, which David uses to overcome Griffin, throwing him into the pylon, where the electric current prevents him from jumping, but does not kill him. Victorious, David teleports away. Though the chase has involved various iconic global locations, it is telling that it concludes here, the two jumpers settling their own score in the midst of a civil conflict of territorial self-determination. Long-running and politically complex warfare in the North Caucasus is reduced to a mundane trait, just as much a geographical feature of visual consumption as London's Houses of Parliament or the Egyptian Pyramids. Lacking movement to and from the warzone, or any imperative to linger within it, the protagonists and the audience are spared even minimal exposure to history or politics. This battleground is visually accessible to the jumpers through its presentation by news and media outlets (they must have once seen a picture of a place in order to be able to jump there), but is not engaged with in any meaningful manner. As Nezar AlSayyad intimates, this is the paradox of globalisation:

> It promises all the possibility of being part of an interconnected globe and yet it is marked by great inequalities often resulting in a hardening of national, ethnic, and religious identities. It promises that we will all know and possibly visually witness what is happening everywhere in the globe and yet it is marked by a persistent distance from what we perceive to be so near and so familiar. Globalization's reality is indeed virtual.[94]

David and Griffin visually witness all that the globally interconnected environment has to offer, yet their nomadic lifestyles maintain psychological distance from these places.

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[93] Many of the locations teleported to in the finale are created or given their iconography digitally: for instance, a beach in Mexico where shooting took place becomes Dubai through the insertion of the Burj Al Arab hotel into the background using digital special effects, and a helicopter shot of the Pyramids of Giza becomes part of the action through the digital superimposition of David and Griffin dueling upon it, their physical action actually shot in a studio. This furthers the sense of touristic global space as ephemeral, simulated and separate from real experience.

[94] Nezar AlSayyad, 'Foreword', in Christoph Lindner (ed), *Globalization, Violence, and the Visual Culture of Cities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. xv–xvi (p. xv).

Third world violence is therefore presented as a fact of life, a background (if chosen as such, avoided if not) to the ever on-the-move existence of the tourist.

Chapter Conclusion

The world of *Jumper*, then, is a world of sites. These, as Casey describes them, are not very place-like: 'Site is the very undoing of place, its dismantling into punctiform positions'; it is an 'anti-place'.[95] While Casey is hopeful that such sites and site-logic will not prevail in human thinking, thanks to the fact that '[t]here are more places than we can keep track of, or visit, much less own or exploit', he nonetheless concedes that a consequence of the commodification of places is a thinly spread technological landscape, 'consisting merely of positions and distances, bare locations and barren relations. Such a wasted (and wasteful) site-scene lacks region and is destitute of depth'.[96] This is the space sought by capitalism, the 'lens' it has as its 'goal' in Lefebvre's words.[97] As Andrew Merrifield summarises, in the 'ideal world of capitalism, capital would be just a "free-floating" flow liberated from any constraints of space and place', and this is the world glimpsed at in *Jumper*.[98] In the Bourne trilogy global space is similarly surmountable, as Bourne is able to cross borders and travel between continents with speed and ease, and the infrastructure of secret state surveillance permeates all spaces, able to initiate violence at a moment's notice. The action sequences in *The Bourne Identity*, *The Bourne Supremacy* and *The Bourne Ultimatum* work to contrast this frictionless global space with the challenge of surviving in a particular space, a challenge that Bourne responds to by reducing all buildings and urban frameworks into a readable, textual space of utilitarian objects and ever-present threat. The difficulties of the new multilocationality that Beck suggests is produced by globalisation are here dealt with by a fiercely cartographic, functional engagement with material spatial particulars, rather than deeper understandings of place.

Though these films may appeal to abstract spatial logic, they nonetheless dramatise the importance of place and placeness in their depiction of the consequences of its absence.

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[95] Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1997), p. 186.
[96] Casey, 1997, p. 341.
[97] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 287.
[98] Andrew Merrifield, 'Place and Space: A Lefebvrian Reconciliation', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 18.4 (1993), pp. 516–531 (p. 521).

The analyses above have sought to show that action sequences focus upon space and spatial experience *even in films that depict processes that erode the specificity and lived conditions of space*. The Bourne trilogy and *Jumper* may represent versions of abstract space, but in doing so in their action sequences they engage with this space and investigate its logics, weak points and human cost. It will be the task of the following chapter to indicate how action films can use the environmental attention this thesis considers typical of the action sequence form to more directly depict the importance of place within the contemporary workings of globalisation.

Chapter 3: Finding Place

It has been asserted that even though the Bourne trilogy and *Jumper* depict interconnected locations that are reduced to their essential similarities by both the protagonists and the films themselves, their action sequences are nonetheless highly concerned with spatial particulars and the ways in which the subject moves within and perceives contemporary space. As *The International* strongly responded to the off-putting spatial qualities of the Guggenheim New York, showing the initially disorienting attributes of the building being overcome by aggressive spatial engagement, so too the Bourne trilogy and *Jumper* reveal the felt qualities of globalised space. They show this to be a space of unbounded flow that somewhat paradoxically generates a regime of intense optical monitoring and a reduction of space to visual signifiers rather than lived or historical particulars. In this, these films work through the lens of abstract space. Abstract space is part of a wider discourse on 'space', as it is understood dichotomously with 'place' in much critical theory and human geography. Mathematical and isotropic, the concept of space is more indicative than it is literally descriptive, but is generally used as an organising principle in spatial imaginations subsequent to the Enlightenment, and as shown is vital in the production of environments related to capital circulation. It is often contrasted with the concept of 'place', those sites or ways of being in the world which privilege those things that space and commodity production do not: sedimentation of meaning over time, lived experience and tactile, non-visual sensations.

As such, place is concerned with particulars, and with a phenomenological perception of the world as it is experienced by an embodied subject. The tensions and negotiations performed between space and place have already been hinted at during previous discussions of action sequences, especially in the analysis of the use of the Burj Khalifa in *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol*. In this film, the building is both valorised as a highly specific built environment (the world's tallest) that is appropriated within the sequence by the bodily actions of the protagonist; but it is also depicted as a site of business exchange consisting of identical rooms and an emphasis upon corporate homogeneity. Similarly, for Jason Bourne and David Rice it both mattered very much where they were, since this defined the particulars of their physical action and

movement in space, but it also mattered very little, since the accessibility and touristic traits of all sites were shown to be much the same the world over.

The differentiation of place is, then, problematic thanks to what writers like David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre identify as capitalist-led processes of time-space compression and commodification which work to undermine specificity even as they apply value judgments. Capitalism is predicated on frameworks of uneven development that generate networks of exchange. These are reliant upon differentiation even as they work to lessen local differences. This chapter will explore some of the responses to these procedures, the way Lefebvre and other writers consider the creation of meaningful environments to be sought for within such restrictions, and the possibility for action sequences to bring out these qualities of place (rather than space) as they are imagined on both local and global scales. These concepts are expressed thanks to the stated ability of such sequences to reveal and respond to the particular qualities of the spaces in which they are set. As a reading of them alongside Michel de Certeau's work has demonstrated, they appropriate space for the individual against the normally taken-for-granted dictates of contemporary society; in depicting exaggerated versions of the tactical appropriations de Certeau speaks of, this chapter will suggest, action sequences dramatise the process of finding or creating place under the earlier defined conditions of global capitalism.[1] Appropriating space is a way of finding or generating place.

Before proceeding in this vein, however, this chapter will analyse *Casino Royale* (2006), the first film in the recently 'rebooted' James Bond franchise, which established a style that has continued in subsequent entries. As will be shown through readings of existing work on this film, it operates in a manner clearly similar to previous sequences examined in this thesis, depicting the appropriation of space through movement and creative improvisation under pressure. Furthermore, the specific qualities of this movement articulate alternative approaches to spatial engagement and the variety of ways in which restrictions can be worked around. Building on these observations, a more extensive examination of *Quantum of Solace* (2008), the following film in the

[1] As Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert point out, de Certeau reverses the commonly held connotations of the space-place dichotomy, 'using "place" to denote the restrictive and unhomely and "space" (hitherto the designation for the uninhabited and uninhabitable) to theorise a tenuous new form of freedom' – that of the temporal tactics of the emblematic pedestrian (Buchanan & Lambert, 2005, p. 3). Despite the switch, his use is of a piece with other critical theory, opposing a temporal, personal enunciation with a concrete, rigidly controlled order (de Certeau, 1988, p. 117).

series, will demonstrate that its action sequences highlight the attention paid throughout the film to place and locality, and the threats to which these are susceptible thanks to global operations that escape local control. Showing how Bond's body is used not just to enact violence or escape detection but also to manifest palpable changes in his surroundings, this analysis will seek to understand how *Quantum of Solace* therefore works to dramatise processes of place-knowledge and place-creation that are the foundation of the action sequence.

Casino Royale – Creative Spatial Intervention

Seeming to be directly inspired by the first two Bourne films, the Bond franchise radically changed its signature style upon the production of *Casino Royale* in 2006. The film placed new emphasis upon perceived realism and brutally physical stunts, eschewing the appeals to pantomime villainy, quasi-parodic humour and technological spectacle that had defined previous Bond films, especially those starring Pierce Brosnan released between 1995 and 2002.[2] As Martin Willis has shown, these previous four films manifested power through technology, and Bond's ability to control and manipulate it.[3] In quite a different manner, *Casino Royale* situates power within the ability of the body to physically survive tremendous pain and exertion, and rather than revere the kind of arch distance and calm control often associated with technological proficiency, the film instead speaks to the virtues (or at least the excitement) of an intensely active bodily engagement. As Monika Gehlawat suggests in her essay 'Improvisation, Action and Architecture in *Casino Royale*', Bond asserts his masculinity through 'primitive virtues of stoicism and endurance', often launching himself into a situation without preparation or forethought, trusting that his sheer physical propulsion will keep him alive.[4] In this, the film introduces a mode of spatial engagement new to the Bond franchise, a mode also operating in stark contrast to that of the Bourne films (despite the palpable similarities of the two franchises).

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[2] These are *GoldenEye* (1995), *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), *The World Is Not Enough* (1999) and *Die Another Day* (2002).

[3] Martin Willis, 'Hard-Wear: The Millennium, Technology and Brosnan's Bond', in Christoph Lindner (ed), *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 169–183. On this topic, see also Patrick O'Donnell, 'James Bond, Cyborg-Aristocrat', in Edward P. Comentale, Stephen Watt & Skip Willman (eds), *Ian Fleming and James Bond: The Cultural Politics of 007* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), pp. 55–70.

[4] Monika Gehlawat, 'Improvisation, Action and Architecture in *Casino Royale'* in Christoph Lindner (ed), *Revisioning 007: James Bond and* Casino Royale (London & New York: Wallflower, 2009), pp. 131–143 (p. 141).

An early chase sequence in *Casino Royale* in Madagascar between Bond and a bomb-maker named Mollaka shows them both moving at speed through a construction site in their efforts to out-run each other. Bond commandeers a bulldozer to gain access to the site, then re-angles the position of a crane as he jumps onto and runs along it before leaping onto the girder skeleton of the skyscraper being built. While the bomb-maker climbs the rope of a further crane mounted on the roof of the structure, Bond grips the rope and unlatches this crane's cargo, unbalancing the guyline – this instantly pulls him up to the body of the crane itself. Throughout the rest of the sequence his body continues to bounce, drop and ricochet off the surfaces of the site in a pinball-like manner, barely controlled yet always able to survive. After a particularly bruising fall, he raises himself up and shakes his head in frustration, a cartoon-like gesture (it evokes Homer Simpson) that emphasises Bond's tendency get knocked about as well as his ability to shake off the physical effects of these knocks almost instantaneously.

The attention to bodily motion in this sequence and throughout the film leads Gehlawat to assert that *Casino Royale* endorses 'improvisation over forms of technological or social mastery',[5] this being for her most clearly revealed during action sequences, as in these moments Bond trusts in his 'ability to find a way where others may not' leading him to 'destroy[...] first and act[...] later'.[6] In this, and purposefully or not, Gehlawat evokes de Certeau's words on the improvisational actions of pedestrians, using as she does very similar terminology: the title of her essay, 'Improvisation, Action and Architecture', could be a subtitle to de Certeau's own chapter on 'Walking in the City'.[7] Bond, for her, does not harness his own technological means, but rather always briefly appropriates technology that belongs to others and is designed for different purposes and turns it to his own ends. He does so 'in a manner that recalls guerilla tactics rather than the calculation of a secret agent'.[8] In this way he generates a 'creative wedge'[9] – a meeting of body and space that did not previously exist. Such a wedge, as shown, is also identified by de Certeau in the everyday actions of the pedestrian, who briefly appropriates the urban grid and other commodities for their own ends in the manner of a

[5] Gehlawat, 2009, p. 132.
[6] Gehlawat, 2009, p. 136.
[7] De Certeau, 1988, pp. 91–110.
[8] Gehlawat, 2009, p. 141.
[9] Gehlawat, 2009, p. 133.

peddler, ‘carrying something surprising, transverse or attractive compared with the usual choice’.[10]

In her observations Gehlawat usefully demonstrates that *Casino Royale*’s action sequences function in the same way as those previously examined in this thesis, drawing attention not only to the constituents of space, but also the way these can be worked around and adapted to, and how this is a creative process involving bodily movement. Bond is much like Bourne in his ability to adapt to environments, but his adaptations are often far more spectacular, Bond’s tendency to throw himself into immediate tactile contact with vehicles, assailants and above all spaces contrasting with Bourne’s more distanced and reluctant approach. Bourne reads terrain from an often-anonymous vantage point before acting precisely and quickly; Bond rushes in, reading and acting as he goes. After the aforementioned action on the building site, Bond continues pursuing the bomb-maker into a heavily guarded embassy: rather than pause and consider his options, the film makes it very clear that he launches straight in without a plan, being carelessly caught on camera. Here he continues to take advantage of whatever he can, even throwing his quarry against approaching security guards to distract them. This, for instance, is quite opposite to how Bourne attempted to bring in a useful asset in *The Bourne Ultimatum*, as he scanned Waterloo Station for threats, moving carefully and considerately to avoid being seen by cameras and assassins, keeping the presence and consequences of violence within quiet and hidden corridors as much as he could.

Until the embassy-set conclusion to the Madagascar sequence, Bond and Mollaka’s own modes of action have been contrasted within *Casino Royale* for the purposes of excitement, humour and novelty. Rather than show the two moving through space in the same manner, the film highlights their alternative approaches to the obstacles they come up against: Mollaka moves through a wrecked car, Bond around it; Mollaka climbs a girder, Bond repositions a crane; Mollaka slips through a small hole above a plaster wall, Bond bursts his way through the wall itself, and so on. Mollaka is played by Sébastian Foucan, one of the originators of parkour, a discipline which arose as a radical spatial response to the alienating concrete *banlieues* on the outskirts of Paris, and which combines ‘gymnastic agility with a creative approach to urban landscapes

[10] De Certeau, 1988, p. 101.

[...], in order to produce physical acts seemingly in defiance of gravity and the constraints of material space'.[11] Foucan's casting works to take advantage of this, as the character is given no lines, and is killed once the chase is finished. Mollaka's ability to move in ways that Bond cannot, ways that are visually striking on film, is, then, the primary reason for the character's inclusion.

In his own essay on *Casino Royale*, Brian Baker indicates how contemporary theories of mobility, capital flow and a touristic mode of being in the world can be fruitfully read out of the way the film constructs not only its global-thriller narrative, but also depicts the micro actions of the onscreen bodies. The generation of contrasts is crucial to this. For Baker, both participants in the Madagascar chase use space in creative and unexpected ways, but the alternatives within this creative use are themselves demonstrative of opposing kinds of mobilities in the modern world: the assertive, white, Western agent of the state and the threatened, threatening, illegitimate movement of the African terrorist.[12] *Casino Royale* therefore, he argues, not only embraces 'contemporary globalised capital's emphasis upon free movement: of information, of resources and of the gaze,' but also 'the necessity to police this movement and maintain borders or erect barriers to restrict this fluidity'.[13] Beyond this observation, it is necessary here to highlight the very presence of these alternative, equally improvisational modes of spatial engagement: Bond's brute force and his quarry's lithe acrobaticism together manifest the possibilities of space, its capacity to yield a variety of interpretations, of ways of knowing and creatively re-purposing it. If parkour reveals 'the insufficiency of mere walking' for understanding and enunciating contemporary space,[14] then Bond's notably more brusque approach demonstrates even further the variety of ways in which space can be acted.

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[11] Neil Archer, 'Virtual Poaching and Altered Space: Reading Parkour in French Visual Culture', *Modern & Contemporary France* 18.1 (February 2010), pp. 93–107 (p. 94).

[12] Brian Baker, '"Gallivanting Round the World": Bond, the Gaze and Mobility', in Christoph Lindner (ed.), *Revisioning 007: James Bond and* Casino Royale (London & New York: Wallflower, 2009), pp. 144–158 (pp. 153–158). Baker uses Tim Cresswell's book on movement to speak about these mobilities. Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York & London: Routledge, 2006).

[13] Baker, 2009, p. 145.

[14] Archer, 2010, p. 96. There is a growing body of literature on parkour as an alternative spatial practicing of the city, much of it drawing on de Certeau, even if only in passing. See, for instance, Bill Marshall, 'Running Across the Rooftops of Empire: Parkour and the Postcolonial City', *Modern and Contemporary France* 18.2 (May 2010), pp. 157–173; and Nathaniel Bavington, 'From Obstacle to Opportunity: Parkour, Leisure and the Reinterpretation of Constraints', *Annals of Leisure Research* 10.3–4 (2007), pp. 391–412

The concluding action sequence of the film expands upon Bond's abilities not only to improvise but also to destroy the environment he finds himself within through his assertive, on-the-wing actions. Taking place in a building undergoing renovation on the Grand Canal in Venice, the sequence similarly shows that 'when Bond arrives on the scene, [buildings] rapidly transform and ultimately disintegrate.'[15] Reflecting Bond's 'emotional free-fall' upon learning of his lover Vesper's betrayal (whom he chases into the building along with her villainous companions), the structure begins collapsing into the water once the balloons keeping it afloat are punctured, and as Gehlawat points out the sequence 'contrasts sharply with the conventional ending of most 007 films in which Bond is captured inside the villain's massive, technologically-enhanced hideout'.[16] Instead, the dark interior, tight angles and general gothic quality reflect the unpleasant psychological spaces through which Bond is forced to navigate having suffered an overwhelming act of treachery (which he nonetheless seems to take in his stride, like everything else).

Venice, a typical destination for romantic getaways, is also shown to be precarious and labyrinthine. An attempt by Bond to extricate himself from both his past actions, as well as his preceding characterisation as a cold-hearted womaniser, his trip to the city nevertheless returns the character to the propulsive movement and violence seen in the Madagascar sequence. Once sprung into action he reveals the fragility of the historical space of the structure, and by extension the entire city. Rather than the superficial image of idyllic tourist pleasure glimpsed at when he and Vesper first arrive in Venice, in the action sequence Bond forcefully reveals the peculiar quality of this city's urban space – namely, of course, that it is built upon water. The clear contrast that Gehlawat identifies between this finale and those of many preceding films in the franchise demonstrates the attention that *Casino Royale* places not just upon authenticity (and Venice as a real city, whose buildings are really in danger of collapse) but also, and more importantly, upon the internal mental landscape of the character of Bond. The film here works to use space in an expressive manner, being 'dominated by darkness, claustrophobia and action that, despite its best efforts, lurches inevitably downwards'.[17] It shows the destructive consequences of Bond's active engagement with space, getting behind the tourist

[15] Gehlawat, 2009, p. 133.
[16] Gehlawat, 2009, p. 136.
[17] Gehlawat, 2009, p. 136.

representation of a real space and uncovering the hidden recesses behind it through action-oriented movement.

Casino Royale, then, uses Bond's body 'to comment on issues of aesthetics, violence, mobility and globalisation',[18] as well as to reveal further information about the character of Bond himself. The sequences examined here depict creative spatial improvisation in a manner previously explored in relation to *Ghost Protocol*, further showing the tendency of the action protagonist to operate in a similar manner to de Certeau's pedestrian. Furthermore, like Jason Bourne, Bond is something of a utilitarian, turning all spaces and objects into things that can assist him in his goal. However, for Bond, improvisation is instant, highly energetic and sustained, and he does not have the benefit of Bourne's reduction of space to visual abstraction. This is a result of his inclination to engage with space without forethought, his on-the-run improvisations manifesting massive and lasting damage in a mobile yet clearly material surrounding environment, something that Bourne's momentary incursions into strategically controlled space did not achieve. As Gehlawat has noted, when Bond enters a space it begins to disintegrate as a result of his actions, implicating his ability to not just read and act space, but to change it as well. Bond's ownership of space is also fleeting, but his tactile bodily knowledge of it is greater than that attained by Ethan Hunt, Jason Bourne or the jumpers of *Jumper*.

It is this focus upon the phenomenology of action – shared by all action sequences, but intensified here – that personifies not only *Casino Royale* but also, and more extensively, the franchise follow-up, *Quantum of Solace*. If, as Baker describes, the earlier film articulates new and contrasting mobilities in contemporary space, then in this later film Bond's bodily knowledge of place is more strongly linked to ideas regarding globalisation, uneven development and the ability to manifest local change, ideas expressed in the film's action sequences, which themselves provide indicative examples of how such sequences in general work to create places through the use of movement and intense spatial activity. In order to fully account for these themes, it will be necessary in the next section of this chapter to establish a critical foundation of theories of place, before moving on to analyse *Quantum of Solace* itself, particularly its concluding action sequence.

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[18] Christoph Lindner, 'Introduction: Revisioning 007', in Lindner (ed), *Revisioning 007*, pp. 1–7 (p. 2).

Place in Critical Theory

For Ulrich Beck, globality – that is, the fact that we are now living in a world society in which it is impossible for nation states, territories or individuals to seal themselves off from the various economic, legal and communicatory networks that span the globe – has become an unavoidable and even crucial element of all human action in the late twentieth century.[19] As shown in previous chapters, writers like Henri Lefebvre and Marc Augé warn that this generates a global space controlled by capitalism, in which historical differences are effaced, and replaced by manufactured differences that function according to a touristic or iconic logic. The consequence to the individual is a loss of connection with the world. The Bourne trilogy and *Jumper* react to this, showing protagonists who are unable to root themselves within globally connected space, and so skim across the surface of it. The action sequences of these films exhibit the tendency of all such sequences to appropriate space, but they respond to the affectless quality of the environment by stressing the fleeting, instrumental qualities that define this global space. The movement of the body in space remains crucial to these sequences, but it is movement that seeks surface connection, a cursory knowledge of abstract spatial dimensions for the purpose of survival.

Writers like Beck urge that the developments associated with globalisation must be recognised as occurring, but that this does not mean they should be taken as inevitable. He stresses the co-presence of those transnational actors like corporations that are pushing forward processes of globalisation, de-territorialising capital and making labour and production highly mobile in order to maximise profits, and also the losers of globalisation, who pay the price of these changes.[20] He denies the 'McDonaldization' thesis – that of a '*single commodity-world* where local cultures and identities are uprooted and replaced with symbols from the publicity and image departments of multinational corporations'[21] – and calls for a more nuanced understanding of the simultaneous processes of 'delocation and relocation' during which local difference is re-articulated within a global context.[22] Clear-cut understandings of global homogeneity

[19] Beck, 2000, p. 15.
[20] Beck, 2000, p. 6.
[21] Beck, 2000, p. 43 emphasis in original.
[22] Beck, 2000, p. 46.

or local heterogeneity should be superseded by an awareness of regional differentiation as a contingent and changing production reacting to and dependent on – but not defined by – the global flow of capital.

This section will articulate the various ways that these productions are currently theorised, focusing on the creation of place – a production of spatial particularity which is not commodified or solely visual, but is instead somehow lived and genuine (even though such places must by the nature of contemporary technology and ideologies operate within a global context). In this, places are often contrasted with the 'spaces' described in the previous chapter, spaces produced by capital and flow which are somehow 'placeless.' Placelessness, as Edward Relph describes in his book on the subject, is a consequence of the perceived drive towards cultural and geographical uniformity. The 'grand scale and virtual absence of adaptation to local conditions' found in late twentieth century architecture typifies this, and leads individuals to – at best – 'neither experience nor create places with more than a superficial and casual involvement'.[23] This is an argument also seen in earlier chapters of this thesis, in which writers like Fredric Jameson and Heinrich Klotz questioned the ability of iconic, abstract architecture to provide meaningful lived experience.[24] However, as the concerns of Jameson and Klotz were shown to be to an extent addressed by action sequences in *Ghost Protocol* and *The International* through their representations of embodied experiences of otherwise alienating structures, so to Relph asserts that placelessness is neither all-encompassing nor irreversible: 'being lived-in confers some authenticity on even the most trivial and unrelentingly uniform landscapes'.[25] Though it is increasingly difficult to feel or create places in an authentic manner, it is not impossible.

What options are available to the contemporary subject for positioning themselves in 'place', even as they face a built environment that is overcoded, directed towards and managed by an abstract money economy which devalues community, and consists increasingly of sites that isolate and functionalise the individual and their movements?[26]

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[23] Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976), pp. 79–80.
[24] See Jameson, 1991, pp. 40–44; and Klotz, 1988, pp. 60–64.
[25] Relph, 1976, p. 80.
[26] Overcoding, the abstract money economy (and its effect on community) and the isolation and instrumentalisation of the individual in non-places have been written about, respectively, by Ian Buchanan, Anthony Giddens, and Marc Augé. Ian Buchanan, 'Space in the Age of Non-Place', in Ian

Lefebvre spends a considerable portion of *The Production of Space* describing the rise and operations of abstract space, but he does so for the explicit goal of imagining an alternative way of conceiving space that would address these problems. The task of the book is to reveal the foundational spatial assumptions of a society in which state rather than individual interests predominate in order to advance 'the project of a different society, a different mode of production, where social practice would be governed by different conceptual determinations'.[27] In his other work Lefebvre identifies the crucial aspect of twentieth century capitalism to be its reproduction not just of the means of production but of the relations of production, processes that occur 'not simply in *society as a whole* but in *space as a whole*'. Space, he asserts, 'occupied by neo-capitalism, sectioned, reduced to homogeneity yet fragmented, becomes the seat of power', and it is for this reason that he examines space – in order to reveal and undermine its primary state in late capitalism as an engine for the reproduction of the conditions of capitalism itself. [28]

Only under the conditions of an embodied connection to space, an awareness of it as lived *texture* rather than observed *text*, can the spatial veils of illusion and ideology that normally occupy it be lifted.[29] Lefebvre explores contemporary spatiality in order to assess its weaknesses and to put forward, in brief, an alternative model. This model seeks to point the way 'towards a different space, towards the space of a different (social) life', prioritises what is *lived*, rather what is '*known* or *seen*', and is centered around the body rather than the abstract mental realm.[30] It is a way of understanding space (and life) based on the 'material, sensory and natural realms'.[31] The importance of lived experience means that his, or any other, 'revolutionary "project"' requires the 'reappropriation of the body, in association with the reappropriation of space, [...as] a non-negotiable part of its agenda'.[32]

Buchanan & Gregg Lambert (eds), *Deleuze and Space* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 16–35 (pp. 31–32); Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 121; Augé, 1995.

[27] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 419.

[28] Henri Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism*, Frank Bryant (trans.) (New York: St Martin's Press, 1976), p. 83, emphasis in original.

[29] See Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 222, p. 415.

[30] Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 60-61, emphasis in original.

[31] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 368.

[32] Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 166–167.

For Lefebvre, then, a better spatial being-in-the-world than the one that currently predominates is one that is phenomenological and bodily in its concerns and attentions.[33] Yet this is not the whole story in theories of place, which, in addition to emphasising subjective embodied experience, also stress an appreciation of context on a variety of scales. Places need to be approached with a nuance that permits awareness of both local conditions *and* how the local interacts with global forces (themselves an ever-shifting network, or network of networks). John Agnew, for instance, suggests that place cannot be understood simply as a locale, or 'as setting for activity and social interaction', but must also be seen as a location, a site in which the 'reproduction and transformation of social relations' is taking place. These reproductions and transformations are '*located* according to the demands of a spatially extensive division of labour, the global system of material production and distribution, and variable patterns of political authority and control'.[34] The 'local social worlds of place (locale) *cannot* be understood apart from the *objective* macro-order of location and the *subjective* territorial identity of sense of place'.[35] Lived experience and wider context are both necessary for place-construction. Agnew is not alone in suggesting this, other human geographers stating in a similar vein that place is best understood with 'access to both an objective and a subjective reality': if the de-centered scientific vantage point denudes the environment of its human significance, and the centered viewpoint of the subject is too parochial in scope, then place 'is best viewed from points in between'.[36]

Place-sensitive geographies seek an understanding of space that is polyvalent and shifting.[37] For this reason the use of mapping for *representation*, and for the fixing of meaning in a static (spatial) framework is critiqued by Doreen Massey, for whom the concepts of both space and time are hindered in contemporary imagination through their dichotomisation in critical thought. Spatialisation fixes meaning and time, but does so by robbing existence (and accounts of existence) of their movement, flow and vitality.[38]

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[33] Lefebvre clearly has knowledge of Merleau-Ponty's writing, but relegates direct reference to it in *The Production of Space* to occasional footnotes.
[34] John Agnew, 'Representing Space: Space, Scale and Culture in Social Science' in James Duncan & David Ley (eds), *Place/Culture/Representation* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 251–271 (p. 262, emphasis in original).
[35] Agnew, 1993, p. 263, emphasis in original.
[36] J. Nicholas Entrikin, *The Betweenness of Place: Towards a Geography of Modernity* (London: MacMillan, 1991), p. 5. On this in-between viewpoint see also Massey, 2005, p. 101.
[37] See for example Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 205–206, p. 211.
[38] Massey, 2005, p. 27.

Like Lefebvre and Agnew, Massey pleas 'for an alternative approach to space'.[39] For her the most important element of this approach should be the acknowledgement of space as full of 'a multiplicity of trajectories'.[40] If space is treated not as 'a discrete multiplicity of inert *things'* but is instead seen to present 'a heterogeneity of practices and *processes*' then it will remain flexible, in flux, and therefore open to political and ideological change.[41] Like Lefebvre, Massey calls for an overturning of existing frameworks and the development of a new spatial imagination predicated on contingency and flow. However, this cannot occur simply through a privileging of place, specificity and historical memory over space, homogenisation and capitalist exchange-value. A more fundamental change is required, change which for Massey involves the acknowledgement that '[w]e are always, inevitably, making spaces and places'.[42] She stresses the fact that places (and spaces) are contingent productions of interrelations, not material containers. She suggests furthermore that 'a real recognition of the relationality of space points to a politics of connectivity and a politics whose relation to globalisation will vary dramatically from place to place'.[43]

For Edward S. Casey, developments in globalisation, including the polarisation of uneven development (under the aegis of which parts of the world are structurally positioned by capitalism to provide cheaper resources or labour), call attention to the phenomenological lived experience of place, and the importance of this in distinguishing felt differences between places. In his avowedly philosophical (rather than geographical or cultural) model, '[v]alorization of local differences arises in the very face of global capitalism and global communication networks', doing so 'partly as [a] resistance to them'.[44] The rise of abstract space and non-places draw attention to our bodily contact with the world, precisely because the opportunities and value of such contact has, apparently, become diminished. To exist at all, Casey states, 'is to have a place – *to be implaced* [*sic*], however minimally or imperfectly or temporarily'.[45] Place is therefore 'the *condition* of all existing things' and so 'belongs to the very concept of

[39] Massey, 2005, p. 9.
[40] Massey, 2005, p. 5.
[41] Massey, 2005, p. 107 emphasis in original.
[42] Massey, 2005, p. 175.
[43] Doreen Massey, 'Geographies of Responsibility', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 86.1 (2004), pp. 5–18 (p. 17).
[44] Casey, 2009, p. xxiii.
[45] Casey, 2009, p. 13, emphasis in original.

existence'.[46] Casey forcefully asserts this phenomenological basis of knowledge, doing so while conceding that this has been undermined by the homogenous and isotropic spatiality of science and capitalism, the detrimental effects of which in turn generate a call for new ways of understanding place:

> The new bases of any putative primacy of place are themselves multiple: bodily certainly, but also psychical, nomadological, architectural, institutional, and sexual. Since there is no single basis of the primacy of place, there is no monolithic foundation [such as religion, or Cartesian science] on which this primacy could be built. What is at stake is a polyvalent primacy – an equiprimordiality of primary terms.[47]

Drawing attention to the subjective experience of the subject and their orientation in their environment represents 'a constructive response to the forces of globalization in communicational, technological, economic, climatological, and migratory contexts'.[48]

Attention to place, the perception of place-ness, and the imperative for place creation are, then, seen by many as required bodily responses to otherwise alienating and abstracting spatial imaginations (even admitting that an awareness and exploitation of local differentiation is also fundamental to the capitalist system). Place-theory complicates any conclusion that local specificity is *necessarily and inevitably* dominated by capitalistic logic (as in the construction of tourist attractions and touristic spaces), but rather suggests that it is through the production of place that touristic spatial constructs and abstract homogenous environments of capital flow can be countered, fought against, or appropriated. In pointing towards a spatial imagination predicated on a concurrent awareness of the micro and macro realms (or the subjective and the objective), and the contingent and shifting qualities of spatial production, many of the writers examined in this section are indebted to poststructuralist thought, which highlights the heterogeneity and the situated-ness of knowledge networks (rather than the abstract, universalising knowledge associated with modernism, structuralism and 'space').[49] Writing by Lefebvre and Casey in particular indicates how this approach

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[46] Casey, 2009, p. 15, emphasis in original.
[47] Casey, 1997, p. 337.
[48] Casey, 2009, p. xxxv.
[49] On the poststructuralist approach to space, see Jonathan Murdoch, *Post-Structuralist Geography* (London: Sage, 2006); and Marcus Doel's *Poststructuralist Geographies: The Diabolical Art of Spatial Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). The latter describes the method as 'a driftwork, a wanton abandonment, an active nihilism', thanks to its aversion of universalising knowledge-systems (p. 3).

appeals to phenomenology the understanding of place as the point of the body's contact with the world.

It is from this idea of place being related to and created by bodily world-contact that an interpretation of action sequences as being productions of place can build. This tendency is true of all action sequences – which through their focus upon space and the body's engagement with space naturally draw ideas of place and spatial particularity toward them – but action sequences found in the recent entries in the Bond franchise, with their emphasis on Bond's physical interaction with environmental specifics, highlight this process. This has been hinted at through an analysis of *Casino Royale* and critical response to the film, with Baker in particular stressing how Daniel Craig's Bond has a mode of being-in-the-world that is specifically based around motion and interaction, in contrast to previous cycles in the Bond series which favoured a touristic, detached aesthetic that did not interrogate space in the same way.[50] *Quantum of Solace* continues this portrayal, and the next section will explore how Bond's embodied spatial improvisation further creates places through action sequences that are plotted simultaneously in highly global and intensely local contexts.

Quantum of Solace – Regional Resistance

Analysis of *Casino Royale* showed that the film depicts a highly active, improvisational action protagonist, and while this characterisation continues in *Quantum of Solace*, this later film also works hard to indicate the difficulty of finding place within a world space saturated and directed by quasi-invisible transnational corporations. The narrative of the film involves the machinations of a globally mobile, invisible conglomerate called Quantum and their attempts to control the resources of Bolivia, attempts which rob the local populace of affordable drinking water. The film then proceeds, through its action sequences, to suggest resistances to the globalising processes Quantum represents, resistances centered on the body of the action protagonist and the creation of a place of meaning and memory. Though James Bond has accurately been described as operating as a 'professional tourist' in previous films in the franchise,[51] in *Quantum of Solace* he becomes embedded with the locality of Bolivia and involved in a struggle that concerns

[50] Baker, 2009, pp. 150–154.
[51] James Chapman, 'A Licence to Thrill', in Christoph Lindner (ed), *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 109–116 (p. 115).

neither nuclear weapons nor threats to global sovereignty but rather comparatively mundane state corruption and the misuse of a highly localised resource. This is not a rejection of the previous 'internationalism' that James Chapman describes as a crucial element of the franchise,[52] but rather an update to a new kind of internationalism that takes into account the facets of globalisation described above by Beck and others. The action sequences extend the bodily attention presented in *Casino Royale* and provide particularly keen examples of the methods by which the focus upon bodily movement and phenomenological knowledge (and the spatial changes generated by these) in such sequences creates places as they are understood in geographical and cultural theory.

Throughout the film locality is highlighted, most overtly in the use of place-specific typefaces for each new location: cities including Siena, London, La Paz and Bregenz are introduced with onscreen titles written in locally-associated lettering. London, for instance, is written on the screen in the same font as appears on street signs in that city. In addition to this idiosyncratic assertion of heterogeneity (not seen before in the franchise) the film includes scenes that explicitly highlight the struggles of the Bolivian people in the face of their manipulation by a globally active corporation about whom nothing is known. The narrative engages with issues of uneven development through its depiction of the privatisation of the water supply of Bolivia, a corporate incursion into people's lives that leaves them far less well off. While presenting the global reach and capability of a tourist class epitomised by Bond, his associate Camille and the villain Dominic Greene, the film also shows those disenfranchised by the development of globalisation. Greene speaks early in the film about Quantum's supposed involvement in the politics of Haiti, the organisation preventing the establishment of a higher minimum wage on the island, thus allowing other corporations to continue using cheap local labour to make 't-shirts and running shoes' which will be sold and profited from elsewhere. Greene's public profile is that of a CEO and philanthropist, his charity work focusing on ecological preservation, a detail that further places him within a global rather than national context.

The scope and style of this plotting leads Joshua Clover to make the suggestive comment that 'you can stare directly at [the film] and still have the sense that you aren't really seeing what's going on – it's too complex, or perhaps your faculties of perception

[52] Chapman, 2009, p. 115.

aren't yet developed enough to take it in'.[53] Clover suggests the film had this effect on many reviewers, most or all of who miss the similarity of Greene's machinations alongside the corrupt local officials to real incidents in the Bolivian city of Cochabamba, which in 1999 privatised its water supply in a $2.5 billion, forty year deal with a global corporation. Poorer residents, who were paying up to ten times more for their water than those in wealthier areas due to the nature of the investment, began protesting. This led to military action and the declaration by the Bolivian government of a state of emergency in the city.[54] As Clover points out, the 'displacements and distortions' of global politics by Hollywood cinema is nothing new, but nonetheless it is worth taking notice of that which 'the spectacle business has gotten anxious about, and [has] started spectacularizing full force'.[55] The close affiliation of the plot in *Quantum of Solace* to real events that took place in the same country under similar geopolitical conditions (albeit with a very different resolution) indicate the extent to which the film embeds itself within local reality as well as the reality of localities, and explores the intersection of these with global forces.

Quantum themselves, for instance, function as a clear corollary to the 'winners' of globalisation in accounts of it by Beck, Massey and Zygmunt Bauman. Free-floating capital, mobile labour, and the transnational corporations who control these movements exist in a kind of global ether, not being tied to any particular site or nation, operating in an almost abstract manner for their own ends. These leave negative traces only at the level of locality, but they efface the connections between their actions and the main consequence: global poverty. This poverty is reduced to a problem of how to feed the hungry, not how to cure the structural instability that actively produces them. This is Bauman's view, when he suggests that in such a system, 'The riches are global, the misery is local – but there is no causal link between the two; not in the spectacle of the fed and the feeding, anyway'.[56] For Massey the 'double imaginary' of space – which paradoxically holds the 'two apparently self-evident truths' of the goodness and fairness of mobility and of the righteousness and compulsion of border protection – allows the

[53] Joshua Clover, 'Cinema For a New Grand Game', *Film Quarterly* 62.4 (Summer 2009), pp. 6–9 (p. 7). Clover seems to appeal to Jameson's description of the Bonaventure Hotel here, suggesting that *Quantum of Solace* resembles a loaded, or overloaded, spatial experience which both compels and confuses (see Jameson, 1991, pp. 34–39).

[54] For further details about these events see William Finnegan, 'Leasing the Rain', *The New Yorker*, 8 April 2002 <http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/04/08/020408fa_FACT1> [accessed 20 September 2012].

[55] Clover, 2009, p. 9.

[56] Bauman, 1998, p. 74.

rich to move as they like and forces the poor to remain where they find themselves, or rather where they have been forcibly put.[57] Quantum are an allegorical rendering of these invisible, powerful corporate forces that escape any kind of national regulation and which, as they deterritorialise themselves and capital, also firmly territorialise the poverty, hunger and social ills their actions might create, effectively divorcing themselves from the consequences while reaping the profits.

In addition to the plot, many production details further indicate a focus upon issues of globalisation and the value of place. Director Marc Forster speaks of his desire to film not just in real locations, but in locations with which audiences are not familiar: 'the world has become so much smaller, people are more familiar with the world […] so to find really original Bond locations is tricky', he states on the DVD feature 'On Location'.[58] Forster also highlights the value of location shooting in a way that focuses upon qualities of place:

> Stages always smell like dust […]. I much prefer shooting on location, being in touch with a space that has lived. Locations always make me feel calm and provide me with more inspiration.[59]

Filming in Colón, Panama, the production renovated real locations in which scenes were shot – such as apartment blocks – as part payment to locals who were displaced during filming. Craig sums up the approach of the crew when he states on the DVD feature 'On Location' that 'the important thing is we've got to leave this place a bit better than where we found it and that's what we plan to do'.[60]

This philosophy shows itself in the film. From the regional typefaces, to the location shooting and the narrative of global forces intersecting with and profiting from local actors and resources, *Quantum of Solace* emphasises issues of place. An early chase

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[57] Massey, 2006, p. 86.

[58] 'On Location' featurette, Special Treats Productions, copyright 2008 Danjaq, LLC United Artists Corporation & Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc., *Quantum of Solace* DVD (Region 2), distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM). The locations used in the film are listed in Anonymous, 'Quantum of Solace Film Locations', *The Worldwide Guide to Movie Locations*, undated <http://www.movie-locations.com/movies/q/QuantumOfSolace.html> [accessed 14 January 2013].

[59] Quoted in Greg Williams, *Bond on Set: Filming Quantum of Solace* (London: Dorling Kindersley, 2008), p. 29.

[60] A notable exception of this respect for place was the controversy the film generated in Bolivia by filming ostensibly Bolivian desert scenes in Chile, the two countries sharing a troubled political history stemming from territorial ownership disputes. For further details, see Anonymous, 'Bolivia Lodge Their Protest Against Filming in Chile, Both Sides Complain', *MI6: The Home of James Bond*, 5 April 2008 <http://www.mi6-hq.com/news/index.php?itemid=6079&t=mi6&s=news> [accessed 3 December 2012].

sequence indicates how this remains true within the action sequences, as Bond pursues another man over the distinctive tiled rooftops of Siena at the same time as the local horse race – which runs through the streets of the city once a year – is staged. Beyond this local colour and its expression of interest in (and exploitation of) the specifics of the city, the sequence continues to centre meaning on Bond's embodied experience of space, as he responds to change as he also produces change. Bond and his target collapse through an atrium beneath which various high scaffolds are set-up for the purposes of renovating a fresco; they both grab ropes and spiral around the space trying to get the better of one another in a highly dynamic display of spatial proficiency. The sequence extends *Casino Royale*'s ideas of Bond as an improviser who becomes a creative wedge through his own actions, actions that are intensely bodily in that they are physical and immediately responsive, rather than cerebral and carefully considered.

The finale of the film depicts a more extensive engagement with these concepts. Bond, having teamed up with a Bolivian spy named Camille, discovers that Greene will be finalising a deal on behalf of Quantum with the corrupt General Medrano for control of the country's water reserves in an isolated hotel in the desert. Interrupting this exchange, Bond and Camille attack the hotel, and while Bond gets the better of Greene, Camille attempts to settle her own score with Medrano. The hotel catches fire and begins to collapse. Camille is nearly killed, although Bond rescues her and they exit the hotel, leaving Medrano dead and Greene stranded in the desert.

In the film the hotel is called Perla de las Dunas and is situated in the Bolivian desert. In truth, the exterior is the La Residencia, accommodation which serves the Paranal European Southern Observatory in the desert of Northern Chile, while the interior was created on a soundstage at Pinewood Studios. As Forster's comments about the sequence make clear, he was concerned that the setting and content matched:

> Early on [in the production process] I wasn't entirely sure if the emotional core of the scene would play with the right rhythm in a location like Paranal. But the heat and the fire convinced me that, eventually, it would be so out of control that Bond and Camille's connection would be supported through the intensity of the surrounding drama.[61]

[61] Quoted in Williams, 2008, p. 134.

Though grand and iconic in its design, the building is not well known. Horizontal rather than vertical, it is nearly hidden within the desert in which it is placed and which it is designed to resemble. In the film it is a hotel with only one member of staff and no guests, and is depicted as a barren and immobile environment. The entrance appears to be below ground, while the interior lobby is grand in itself but seems accessible only through a labyrinth of stairwells. The rooms line a central corridor full of metallic catwalks, as though scaffolding has been added to what was originally a piece of sculpture rather than a place of dwelling.

Prior to the action sequence there, the hotel might, following Casey, be described as 'empty', being 'desolate, vacuous, lacking history and other forms of specific content', (as opposed to 'full' places that are 'resonant, fulfilling, satisfying and familiar').[62] It seems very much the kind of abstract space or non-place that frictionless capital exchange is perceived to require, or produce for itself: it may be an interesting structure, but it is lifeless and seems to exist nowhere. However, as Casey makes clear, such thin places remain emphatically places despite this thinness, and substitute the previous 'engorged' sense of place for one that 'is no longer guided by established placial parameters such as centers or boundaries' and which, though he terms them empty, can nonetheless not be 'altogether empty' since they have their '*own* parameters such as a felt endlessness, or a-centeredness, or lack of perspectival footholds'.[63] These qualities are echoed in the Perla de las Dunas and the desert surrounding it. In Casey's phenomenological view, just because somewhere is blank or desolate, it remains a place, and can be lived as such: 'Despite an affinity for thick places,' he asserts, 'the contemporary self can flourish even in spaces that are disembodied, virtualized, and notably thin'.[64]

The subsequent action sequence changes the hotel in fundamental ways. It transmutes it from an empty place, or a space of frictionless exchange, into one of meaning, contingency and memory. It does this by imbuing the hotel with personal significance for Bond and Camille, as is necessary for the creation of place. The expenditure of energy depicted, and the negotiations that become necessary by all parties, suggest that

[62] Edward S. Casey, 'Embracing Lococentrism: A Response to Thomas Brockelman's Critique', *Human Studies* 19.4 (October 1996), pp. 459–465 (p. 460).
[63] Casey, 1996, p. 461, emphasis in original.
[64] Casey, 2001, p. 686.

the sequence depicts something of the '*practising* of place' that Massey sees as a crucial way of perceiving space.[65] Instead of an inert container – a viewpoint of space that can estrange us from actions that occur in it, especially those on a global scale – Massey calls for a perception of space as the intersection of trajectories and processes that contribute to identity formation. While space itself is managed and controlled by world economic leaders and corporations, viewing it as an ongoing, manipulable process, 'an active reconfiguration and meeting-up through practices and relations of a multitude of trajectories', allows it to be shaped by individual subjects the world over.[66] As in *Casino Royale*, Bond does not just move in space, but puts space into motion, revealing its multitude of trajectories and his capacity to negotiate them.

The intrusion of Bond and Camille brings explosions, gunfire and chaos to this previously inert place. Bond attacks through the parking garage, his gunfire hitting a hydrogen fuel cell in the wall, the detonation of which starts a chain reaction of destruction; meanwhile, Camille tries to assassinate Medrano, who was responsible for the death of her family in a house fire many years before. Their actions bestow kinetic, destructive life to the hotel. Explosions detonate in a random series, collapsing walkways and scattering rubble. The spectacle of this movement appropriates the space from the inert and invisible actions of strategic forces, the destruction of the fuel cells in particular revealing in a literal manner the flows of energy that maintain this space and which are interrupted by the action protagonists. Rather than frictionless, the hotel becomes an environment of physical struggle and active bodily navigation, and this is crucial to its transformation into a place that permits personalised engagement.

In addition to this visual energisation, the film also works to make the hotel into a place through psychological investment. Action provides the compensatory model desired by Casey, a model which

> allows us to imagine that both self and place may paradoxically prosper in the very desert of the postmodern period, the experience of each being enhanced, rather than simply undermined, in the wasteland of a dried-out life-world.[67]

The deserted site of the hotel, then, paradoxically enhances Bond and Camille's experiences by prompting memories of past traumas, traumas they are then able to

[65] Massey, 2005, p. 154, emphasis in original.
[66] Massey, 2005, p. 83.
[67] Casey, 2001, p. 686.

overcome through the destructive operations typical of the action sequence. Their actions, their appropriations, fill this otherwise empty space with meaning, memory and history, conferring upon it an authenticity that was not present before. When Camille is trapped in a burning room she reverts to a childhood memory of being in her family home when Medrano set it alight. Bond too is plunged into a recursive psychology as he prepares to witness the death of another woman with whom he has become aligned (a motif of the franchise, and a pattern alluded to in the sequence by Greene when he says Bond is about to 'lose another one'). The previously affectless site of the hotel becomes a deeply meaningful psychological environment, acquiring the 'resonant, fulfilling, satisfying, familiar' qualities of a 'full' place, as Bond breaks the pattern, demolishing a wall with a well-placed gunshot, allowing both he and Camille survive and escape.[68] Placelessness is demonstrated to be reversible, since after all 'being lived-in confers some authenticity on even the most trivial and unrelentingly uniform landscapes'.[69] The action sequence is here something of a hyperbolic exaggeration of this condition of 'being lived-in'.

This transformation of space into place occurs not only through visual energisation and psychological investment, but also through the active body of Bond as he works to command the space. While the transactions and machinations being interrupted are global, the actions resisting them are local; the action sequence form makes them so localised as to be centred upon an exerting body. As in the action sequences examined previously in this thesis, the activity of the action protagonist maps onto human co-ordinates feats that are beyond our abilities or our immediate experience, and in doing so also embodies and overcomes anxieties regarding space. An initially disorienting or alienating environment is here again surmounted by active bodies who learn their way about, which for Casey has the effect of 'transmuting an initially aimless and endless scene into a place of concerted action': in this way, '[u]nplacement becomes implacement' as space becomes not an objective container but a site of possible bodily

[68] Casey, 1996, p. 460. Derek Gregory offers a story from a quantum physicist on phenomena such as this: 'Here, for example, is [Niels] Bohr talking with another physicist, Werner Heisenberg, about their visit to Kronberg Castle in Denmark: "Isn't it strange how this castle changes as soon as one imagines that Hamlet lived here? As scientists we believe that a castle consists only of stones and admire the way the architect put them together. The stones, the green roof with its patina, the wood carvings in the church, constitute the whole castle. None of this should be changed by the fact that Hamlet lived here, and yet it is changed completely. Suddenly the walls and the ramparts speak a quite different language"'. Gregory, 1994, p. 56; quoting Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Beyond: Encounters and Conversations*, Arnold J. Pomerans (trans.) (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 51.

[69] Relph, 1976, p. 80.

engagements.[70] Moreover, the tactile qualities of the building are revealed by Bond's engagement with them, as he learns about his environment through the generation of violence, motion and destruction, all of which strip away surface abstraction and expose the inner workings and materiality of space.

Bond and Camille's actions are global as well as local, even if their efficacy on a global level is put into doubt by the mise-en-scene of the film. David Harvey comments that while the '"otherness" and "regional resistances" that postmodern politics emphasize can flourish in a particular place' they are all too often 'subject to the power of capital', the homogenising force of which negates such politics.[71] In the Perla de las Dunas sequence resistance is put up to global forces on the level of the body as well as the mind, which both work to create a place out of a space. As Thomas Gieryn states, '[a] spot in the universe, with a gathering of physical stuff there, becomes a place only when it ensconces history or utopia, danger or security, identity or memory', and he more generally identifies 'three necessary and sufficient features' of place: geographical location, material form, and investment with meaning and value.[72] By the time Bond and Camille have been victorious, they have generated all of these. They have given the Perla de las Dunas 'geographical location' not only by revealing it as a site of capital machinations but by creating a plume of black smoke which makes the structure more visible in the desert; they have revealed its 'material form' through physical action and kinetics asserting the materiality of the building; and they have invested it with 'meaning and value' by imbuing it with their psychological demons, which they have then overcome. Additionally, by presenting the possibility for global processes to be felt, engaged with and interrupted at the level of the body, they and the film have demonstrated the intersection of macro and micro viewpoints understood by many theorists of place as necessary for political action.

Despite this, the context of the hotel works to undermine the efficacy of these events, since it is in an overtly isolated desert location. Dialogue and wide shots of the area stress the disconnection of the building, and in doing so remove a degree of local context. For reviewer Anthony Lane, '[t]he place is so isolated, and frankly so hideous,

[70] Casey, 2009, p. 29. The way in which phenomenological world-perception and the action sequence form intersect, the latter possibly providing an intensified demonstration of the former, will be analysed in the concluding chapter of this thesis.
[71] Harvey, 1994, p. 239.
[72] Gieryn, 2000, pp. 464–465.

that there appear to be no other guests', leading to minimal collateral damage but also a sensation of indifference: at the end of the sequence, he comments, 'the world is saved, and nobody even noticed'.[73] This remoteness is vital to consider when examining the manner in which local, bodily work resists global, capitalist forces. As Lefebvre, Massey and others have noted, appreciation of a particular place should also carry with it an awareness of the global systems and wider identities with which that place is associated.[74] The isolation of the Perla de las Dunas makes this problematic. In this way the sequence manifests the difficulties associated with bodily action in a globalised world: part of the reason Bond can succeed in overpowering the villains is *precisely because* nobody notices. As defined by Bauman,

> all the most fundamental problems [today…] are *global*, and being global they admit of no local solutions; there are not, and cannot be, local solutions to globally originated and globally invigorated problems.[75]

This means that politics becomes more localised as any wider influence it could previously lay claim to is removed to the purview of multinationals.[76] In the Perla de las Dunas sequence, the impossibility of local solutions is addressed by creating a place that lacks a territory, and by extension a locality. The assertions of geographical specificity made previously by the film are here to some extent annulled. The isolation of the hotel quarantines it from the context of Bolivia or the regulation of state or government operations; the transactions of global corporations must take place *somewhere*, the film suggests, but the design and location of the Perla de las Dunas indicates how these transactions seek to be disembedded from any particular locality.

It is for this reason that the action here feels both emphatic and hollow. Divorced from politics and nation, it can seem as though there is little at stake during the finale. Yet the action sequence that takes place there *does* provide solutions to the problems depicted in the preceding narrative, the generation of place de-railing the machinations of an abstract, relentless globalising corporatism which relies upon uneven development and the negative consequences it has for some local populations. *Quantum of Solace* depicts the process of place-creation within a quarantined site, as this is the only place, it seems,

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[73] Anthony Lane, 'Soul Survivor', *The New Yorker*, 17 November 2008 <http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2008/11/17/081117crci_cinema_lane?currentPage=all> [accessed 20 September 2012].
[74] See, for instance, Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 403; Massey, 2004, p. 17; Agnew, 1993, pp. 261–264.
[75] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), pp. 25–26, emphasis in original.
[76] On this phenomenon, see Bauman, 2007, p. 82.

that individual action may gain a concerted success over the corporatist logics of capitalism. By staging the action sequence in such a site, the film indicates something of the difficulty inherent in finding local solutions to global problems.

Chapter Conclusion

Space and place are linked but opposed concepts in critical theory, open to many interpretations, the most useful and pertinent of which have been indicated both here and in the preceding chapter. Their use is a consequence of abstracted spatial imaginations, rooted in the Enlightenment, which generate a discourse of isotropic and mathematically homogenous space, and a counter-view of emotionally rich, subjectively experienced heterogenous places. These are ways of interpreting space, concepts for the construction of a spatial imagination, rather than frameworks for the classification of specific environments. Abstract space may be the 'lens' of capitalist production, but any environment that is experienced bodily and subjectively is open to being understood with recourse to ideas of place. As Relph has noted, the process of living in space can confer upon it an 'authenticity' that its design and production may not themselves foster.[77] In this sense, the action protagonist is predisposed to ground themselves in *place*. They make their environments 'lived-in' by attuning themselves to the specificities of their locality, and effecting instant and guided change in this environment in order to survive.

However, as shown by the Bourne trilogy, the need to see all environments in the same way – as open to surveillance and physical threat – fuses them into an undifferentiated mass, the protagonist working to see the world as an abstract space. In line with this, Bourne's movements around the globe are frequently instantaneous (if not quite as instantaneous as those of David and Griffin in *Jumper*), except during action sequences themselves, during which Bourne is made visible and vulnerable by the restrictions and panoptic controls fundamental to abstract space. By contrast, the James Bond of *Casino Royale* views space as a place of creativity and opportunity. He may be as much a spatial functionalist as Bourne, re-deploying whatever he can find to his own ends, but his more embodied and tactile mode of spatial engagement demonstrates the importance of bodily appropriation to the action sequence, appropriation also seen in *Ghost*

[77] Relph, 1976, p. 80.

Protocol and *The International*. In *Quantum of Solace* Bond is further able to endow certain sites with meaning through psychological investment as well as embodied appropriation, changing them through his actions into places. *Quantum of Solace* is far from particular in this regard – indeed, all action sequences work towards implacing the body in space and in this way personalise space – but the film's clear interest in geopolitics and the qualities of localities are suggestive of critical readings privileging ideas of place and place-creation.

Martin Flanagan has suggested that action films depict a space that is 'purely structural', and 'essentially *always the same'* from film to film.[78] Such uniform spaces for him operate as blank canvases upon which action can be staged, akin to a gymnastic mat on which coordinated bodily movement is choreographed with minimal distractions. Many action films and action sequences have been cited so far in this thesis to indicate, by contrast, the importance that space and setting have for the action genre. Examinations of *Ghost Protocol* and *The International* revealed that action sequences can have a symbiotic and mutually constitutive role with the spaces in which they are staged, even if they portray this by providing appropriations of space which run counter to its intended use. In doing so, they emphasise the importance and challenge of space, rather than understanding it as a concrete and instrumental container of people and events. Even as it effaces the specific qualities of various environments across the globe, the Bourne trilogy stresses the importance of place, doing so by denuding the protagonist of the comfort that place brings. The action sequences in the three films manifest the anxiety and danger of being situated in space, a condition that puts the subject at the mercy of the immaterial and global operations of the state. This latter condition was itself the subject of an action sequence in *Jumper*, the operations of which reveal the potential for place to be merely a touristic background, rather than a site of concerted action or psychological and political investment.

Such a site is found in *Quantum of Solace*, the finale drawing upon the theme within the film's narrative of uneven development to depict the importance of place and how the struggle for place-creation in the 'empty' or 'thin' spaces of capital exchange can appropriately be depicted through action and kineticism, ideas that were already hinted at in *Casino Royale* and its depiction of tactile, bodily spatial agency. By grounding

[78] Flanagan, 2004, p. 110, emphasis in original.

Bond and Camille in place, the film presents an exaggerated display of regional resistance triumphing over global processes, but importantly does so within an isolated environment, suggesting that fully successful place-creation is fleeting and requires some kind of segregation from the networked multilocations of globalisation like urban centres. Moreover, the kineticism of the action in *Quantum of Solace* and action sequences in general can in the context of place-theory be understood as depicting the 'throwntogetherness' of place. The word is Massey's, and she stresses that place 'is an event', a 'coming together of trajectories' that is never stable. In her view, places 'ask how we shall respond to a temporary meeting-up with these particular rocks and stones and trees', not to mention people; places demand negotiation.[79] In visualising processes of negotiation, action sequences portray something of Massey's alternative spatiality, bringing inert spaces to life through bodily negotiation and inhabitation.

The preceding three chapters, then, including this one, have established certain fundamental premises of the action sequence, and validated these with examinations of sequences that draw out the particular qualities being explored. These premises are 1) that the action sequence appropriates space in a manner that recalls de Certeau's model of the pedestrian, making such sequences personalised and temporal enunciations of space, a process that can also be understood as a kind of place-creation; 2) that in doing this action sequences inhabit and reflect the spaces in which they are set through their procedures of intense spatial inquiry; and 3) that this inhabitation and reflection can operate on a global level, action sequences representing anxieties about personal bodily agency in a globalised world. The thesis will now build upon these identified qualities and address the manner in which action sequences might themselves be considered highly spatial in the way they interact with narrative procedures and displace (to another space) those anxieties they mobilise regarding contemporary space. These action paraspaces – metonyms of the pleasures of the action sequence form – are the subject of the following chapter.

[79] Massey, 2005, p. 141.

Chapter 4: Action Paraspaces

Essential to both the appeal and the very definition of action cinema is its deployment of spectacle: dazzling displays of technology, physicality, speed, or some combination thereof. In *Spectacular Narratives*, Geoff King indicates how this spectacle is organised as a property of the 'frontier', a wild and uncharted zone, compared with the tame and unspectacular 'civilized' world.[1] He sees this oppositional framework as an arrangement and categorisation of spaces within storytelling inherited from the colonial period, during which time global space was subject to a process of mapping and conquering. This dichotomised it in the (Western) imagination into that which is known and safe on the one hand, and that which is unknown and the source of adventure and danger on the other. The spectacle of action in Hollywood blockbusters opens up, for King, a new frontier zone, a domain in which 'individuals can make a difference, where immediate human agency is presented as free from social constraint' and it is possible to escape the 'mess, tedium and corruption of daily life in late twentieth-century America'.[2] Mark Gallagher likewise understands the spectacle of action cinema to be a separate space, contrasted with mundane day-to-day life, in which cultural anxieties can be displaced and dealt with in a fantasy mode. Present-day contradictions and concerns are translated into 'visual space, into spectacle',[3] this space developed by the male action hero as a 'grandiose emblem of masculinity and control', designed to compensate for his – and the viewer's – concordant loss of influence in the domestic sphere thanks to the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism.[4] Action sequences can create alternative spaces for the unfolding of action, the undertaking of which has the potential to highlight (and often solve, and so annul) the restrictions of the space from which the domain of action is distinguished. The process of spatialisation both writers identify therefore goes beyond the focus of these sequences upon space and spatial engagement (which has been under consideration so far in this thesis), being instead a product of the relationship and tension between that which is coded as spectacular and that which is not.

As a result, action sequences are positioned by some critics as antithetical to narrative, 'halting'[5] or 'disrupting'[6] it, or at the very least being a site in which the 'integration' of

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[1] King, 2000, p. 36.
[2] King, 2000, pp. 18–19.
[3] Gallagher, 2006, p. 45.
[4] Gallagher, 2006, p. 60.
[5] Andrew Darley, *Visual Digital Culture: Surface Play and Spectacle in New Media Genres* (London:

spectacle with narrative might be evaluated as being more or less successful.[7] The action sequences in *True Lies*, *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* and *The International* examined in previous chapters all establish particular locations as open to spatial appropriation, these locations separated from the rest of the film either geographically or through narrative procedures, while those action sequences analysed from the Bourne trilogy and *Jumper* communicate spatial anxieties precisely because the locations of action and spectacle are not delineated in this fashion: they depict an entire world of accessibility, and evoke the anxiety that can be a result of this openness. *Quantum of Solace* more overtly demonstrates how spatial separation, as seen in the Perla de las Dunas sequence, serves both the invisible operations of global capital as well as phenomenological investment in place, the latter of which relies upon bodily and tactile spatial knowledge.

The current chapter will investigate action sequences which clearly and directly express the displacement strategies identified by Gallagher in their use of separate, spectacular spaces for working through the conflicts and restrictions found in the wider narratives of the films. To do this, the motif of the paraspace as it has been worked with by Scott Bukatman and Brian McHale will be utilised. This concept will be outlined, and *Last Action Hero* (1993) presented as a useful text for indicating how action films might themselves be seen to operate in a paraspatial manner.[8] The loosely motivated and visually chaotic paraspaces of *Sucker Punch* (2011) will then be examined for the way in which their aesthetic approach calls attention to the concurrent empowerment and escapism offered by action-oriented spatial constructs. *Inception* (2010) will then be investigated for the way in which it uses action sequences to indicate the workings of the commodity fetish and the extent to which abstract space is a mental construct.

Unlike the real-world geographical and architectural referents examined in previous chapters, the films examined here explicitly project their action into the psychological spaces and interior lives of particular characters. In doing this they highlight the potentially empowering appeal of action-oriented escapism, their nested narratives

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Routledge, 2000), p. 104.

[6] Kevin Fisher, 'Cinephilia as Topophilia in *The Matrix*', in Balcerzak & Sperb (eds), *Cinephilia in the Age of Digital Reproduction*, pp. 173–190 (p. 174).

[7] King, 2000, pp. 2–3.

[8] Aylish Wood has written about the paraspace device in contemporary action cinema with respect to *The Matrix*. See Wood, 'The Collapse of Reality and Illusion in *The Matrix*', in Tasker (ed), *Action and Adventure Cinema*, pp. 119–129.

functioning as metonymic representations of the appeal of Hollywood action cinema. This concept of action films themselves using the logic of the paraspace will be explored below, and will be seen as a fundamental – and fundamentally spatial – aspect of the genre, the displacement of contemporary frustrations and anxieties into a space of spectacle in which they can be resolved being vital to the action sequence.

Spaces for Action

Drawing on the presentation and definition of the term paraspace as put forward by Samuel R. Delany in his essay on cyberpunk,[9] Scott Bukatman develops the concept in relation to cinema, understanding it to offer an insight into postmodern space. In his own essay 'Amidst These Fields of Data: Allegory, Rhetoric, and the Paraspace' Bukatman suggests that a paraspace is a space of difference compared to an established space of normality. It is 'characterized not simply as a separate sphere, but as a site where the conflicts of the normal world are played through and resolved'.[10] While in literature such a space is defined by language play, Bukatman suggests that in film the paraspace can be created by 'the rhetorical excessiveness of an exaggeratedly subjective camera placement', and linked attempts by filmmakers to estrange the viewer from the spatial experience of the section of the film that occurs within the paraspace.[11] This estrangement is prompted not by the creation of entirely alien or unknown spaces and elements, but rather those that correspond to the more conventional spaces of the fiction but are somehow altered. This 'ontological shift' works to 'redefine and extend the realms of experience and human definition in contradistinction to the possibilities inherent in normal space', and thus textually foregrounds structures of technology, language and experience normally taken for granted or ignored.[12] A paraspace is not just a secondary world within a fiction, but a space of estrangement through which tensions in the posited 'normal' world can be dealt with in a heightened manner, this process impacting upon the perception of experience and agency within normality.

As noted, Gallagher understands a majority of 1990s action films to depict a dichotomy of humdrum domesticity and spectacular action, the former coded as feminine and

[9] Samuel R. Delany, 'Is Cyberpunk a Good Thing or a Bad Thing?', *Mississippi Review* 16.2+3 (1988), pp. 28–35.
[10] Bukatman, 1992, p. 203.
[11] Bukatman, 1992, p. 204.
[12] Bukatman, 1992, p. 210.

interior, the latter as masculine and frequently taking place in the public sphere. He suggests that *True Lies* deals with the action genre's tendency to use devices from melodrama (positioned as a feminine genre) by forcefully expressing the domesticity-action distinction in its first half and then allowing visual spectacle to take precedence at the film's conclusion. For Gallagher this approach of combining 'the fantasy space of action with the familiar sphere of marriage and domesticity makes apparent the multiple contradictions between the two realms'.[13] Gallagher interprets the spaces within which action takes place in such films as terrains of simulation and artifice, or 'masculine utopia[s]'.[14] This highlights the tendency of many action films to create and demarcate specific sites and typologies of space in which the central attraction of spectacular action sequences can occur. Unlike other genres such as war films, westerns, or gangster films, 'which situate their violent action in other culturally sanctioned or ritualized spaces (wartime, the historical past, and the underworld, respectively)', the action genre often uses contemporary public settings, and in doing so reveals the extent to which viewers feel estranged 'from both normative institutions and mechanisms of social change'.[15]

This dynamic is clearly in evidence in the 1993 meta-action film *Last Action Hero*, in which action cinema is explicitly paraspatial – a fantasy of empowerment to assuage the urban anxieties and mundane difficulties of the real world. A vehicle for star Arnold Schwarzenegger, the film broadcasts many of the attractions of the genre for the purposes of knowing comedy. Moreover, it spatialises these attractions. The real world, based in New York, is contrasted with the space of the film-within-the-film, which is set in Los Angeles and which openly displays the artifice commonly associated with the mise-en-scene, performances and cinematography of the action genre. Action films are presented by the narrative as a space of empowerment for a young, fatherless boy named Danny, their predictability – the openness of their formal composition – as much a pleasure as the spectacle they present. They are knowing paraspaces, overtly non-real, an escape for the child protagonist from his unhappy existence. Unable to prevent a home invasion in his real life, and given little hope the culprit will be apprehended by

[13] Gallagher, 2006, p. 75.
[14] Gallagher, 2006, p. 76. Martin Flanagan, in applying the concept of the chronotope to the action genre, also stresses the constructedness, the other-worldness, of the space in which action is intended to take place: 'Space is constructed, via production design and shot composition, in a way that complements the action,' creating environments which 'seem to wait for the inevitable burst of action which will activate their potential' (Flanagan, 2004, p. 113).
[15] Gallagher, 2006, pp. 52–53.

the uninterested New York police, in the paraspatial Los Angeles of the film-within-the-film Danny is made partner to a Schwarzenegger's loose cannon cop Jack Slater and accompanies him in tracking down villains in a series of chases. Alienated from social life and state institutions, Danny escapes into a world of spectacular fantasy.[16]

As indicated throughout this thesis, action sequences capitalise on the desire for spatial engagement in contemporary life in their display of outlandish spectacles of spatial appropriation. *Last Action Hero* performs this process, making the action genre an explicitly 'other' space of spectacle, a space not just of stunts and excitement but of visible filmmaking operations to which attention is called through the transparency of the clichés used. In this, it accords with Brian McHale's definition of the paraspace, which for him dramatises the process of world-perception itself:

> The paraspace motif, including cyberspace and its functional equivalent, the myth-world, not only serves to bring into view the "worldness" of the world; it also offers opportunities for reflecting concretely on world-making itself […]. For paraspace is, at least potentially, a scale-model of the fictional world itself, a fictional-world-within-the-fictional-world or *mise-en-abyme* of the text's world. The paraspace motif makes possible, in other words, metafictional reflection *by* the text on its own ontological procedures.[17]

The use of the paraspace in action cinema therefore interrogates how space is perceived. Bukatman indicates how, while in the normal or ordinary space presented by a text space is taken for granted, the paraspace embedded within the text on the other hand brings to light the 'contouring' of space through rhetorical exaggeration and estrangement. In doing so it discloses the presence of this contouring outside of the paraspace, contouring 'that is usually ignored, forgotten, or "unlearned".'[18] The paraspace reveals elements of ordinary space that are normally taken for granted.

For this reason an analysis of the paraspace concept is crucial to this project, and it will be undertaken here using two films that construct explicitly psychological paraspaces of directed empowerment, in this way presenting *mise-en-abymes* of the genre's own

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[16] On the functioning of parody in *Last Action Hero*, see Harvey O'Brien, *Action Movies: The Cinema of Striking Back* (London & New York: Wallflower, 2012), pp. 71–74.

[17] Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), p. 253 emphasis in original. McHale speaks of 'zones' in his earlier work *Postmodernist Fiction*, which here he builds upon using the replacement term 'paraspace'. See Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York & London: Routledge, 1989).

[18] Bukatman, 1992, p. 214. See also Takayuki Tatsumi, 'Some *Real* Mothers: An Interview with Samuel R. Delany', *Science Fiction Eye* 1.3 (1988), pp. 5–11 (p. 8).

operations as they have here been defined. Both *Sucker Punch* and *Inception* stage 'a dissolution of ontological boundaries, presenting a collision and shifting of worlds'[19] In doing so they reflect contemporary debates surrounding so-called postmodern space. Fredric Jameson considers this last to be overwhelming in its effects and scope:

> We are submerged in its henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point where our now postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and practically (let alone theoretically) incapable of distantiation; meanwhile, […] the prodigious new expansion of multinational capital ends up penetrating and colonizing those very precapitalist enclaves (Nature and the Unconscious) which offered extraterritorial and Archimedean footholds for critical effectivity.[20]

The colonisation of the mental life-world that Jameson speaks about here has been hinted at previously in this thesis, and is also seen as a consequence of the capitalist production of space by Henri Lefebvre. For him, everyday life has been colonised: 'It has been brought to an extreme point of alienation, in other words profound dissatisfaction, in the name of the latest technology and of "consumer society".'[21] Lefebvre suggests that this malaise and privation impact upon art, ethics, creativity and consciousness. As indicated in discussions of abstract space, he considers spatial ideologies that serve the state mode of production to have filtered down, to have 'penetrated and colonised' in Jameson's words, to the unconscious mind of those who live within such an ideology. Both writers diagnose this condition, and suggest a certain incompatibility between such ideologies and human subjectivity, an incompatibility that they suggest leads to sensations of alienation and estrangement.

Action sequences then generally seek to disalienate by revealing the contouring of lived space in the representations of embodied action within it. The explicit use of the paraspace device in *Sucker Punch* and *Inception* makes these films paradoxically both fantasies of empowerment and diagnoses of disempowerment, as they present heightened versions of the contradiction between spectacular onscreen activity and immobile viewer spectatorship seen by some to lie at the heart of action cinema generally. For Lisa Purse, a key reason for the popularity and resilience of action films is their depiction of 'fantasies of empowerment', the viewer's latent desire for spatial and bodily mastery sated through displays of action.[22] She sees such 'narratives of

[19] Bukatman, 1992, p. 205.
[20] Jameson, 1991, pp. 48–49.
[21] Lefebvre, 2002, p. 11.
[22] Purse, 2011, p. 45.

becoming' as just that – narratives – rather than dichotomising spectacle and narrative as other writers do: the 'extraordinary capacities of the action hero' are for her displayed in ways that are 'inextricably linked with narrative process'.[23] As shall be shown, *Sucker Punch* approaches the need for fantasies of empowerment head-on rather than integrating these fantasies through narrative: fantasies are presented *as* fantasies, albeit productive ones. In this way, *Sucker Punch* provides an allegorical rendering of the logics of the action film. In a similar manner, the characters and plotting of *Inception* have been interpreted by some commentators to be a metaphor for the filmmaking process.[24] Both films bracket out alternative spaces of action, the setting for their empowering fantasies, in doing so making paraspaces of them. In each film the paraspace functions as a foregrounded '*trompe l'œil*'[25] or '*mise-en-abyme*'[26] working to lay bare the ontological structure of the text. Through such ontological attention, they reveal not only the operations of the action film, but also the saturation of imagination by the very processes that are seen to alienate the individual from contemporary space: among them a privileging of visual spectacle over real lived experience and a corporatism linked to the commodity fetish.

Sucker Punch – Dissociative Space

Action sequences display affirmed physical presence and efficacy in hostile surroundings. They frequently contrast or heighten this with the concurrent threat of powerlessness. Purse suggests that the demonstrations of onscreen physical empowerment are 'affecting precisely because, through staging and presentation, the work of exertion, of moving towards mastery of the situation, is […] foregrounded'. Navigating sensations of empowerment and 'disempowerment', the genre invites physicalised responses (in this way not just appealing to a viewer's rational faculties) that can be understood to appeal to 'primal fantasies about dominating others, or being free from social and behavioural constraints'.[27] For Yvonne Tasker, 'a play around such fantasies of empowerment can be identified as one of the key pleasures offered by the

[23] Purse, 2011, p. 32.
[24] Both these films evidence something of the 'spatialization' that Sean Cubitt complains has taken place in contemporary, or neobaroque mainstream cinema: they work to 'make the narrative, like the diegesis, spatial', movement within this space 'sculptural, architectural, or geographical rather than temporal'. Sean Cubitt, *The Cinema Effect* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), p. 239, p. 224.
[25] McHale, 1989, p. 116, emphasis in original.
[26] McHale, 1989, p. 124, emphasis in original
[27] Purse, 2011, p. 3.

action cinema',[28] films of the genre dramatising 'the social limits of power'.[29] The scenarios presented by these fantasies acknowledge realities of social life, and work through (or fantastically displace) some of the unease these produce.[30]

As shown, *Last Action Hero* is emblematic of these processes in the way it presents the fantasy of action heroics explicitly as cinematic fantasy, evoking the pleasures of the form while also making the form itself the subject of attention. Placing these pleasures within a paraspace is a way of managing the otherwise potentially troubling excesses and inconsistencies of this kind of spectacular display, while still allowing the display to provoke sensations of empowerment in the viewer. Indeed, this accentuation of spectacular elements aids sensations of empowerment because the viewer (like the protagonist) knows the clichés and operations of the genre (while other characters within the film do not). *Sucker Punch* likewise presents paraspaces of action spectacle that are separate from the more mundane world also depicted by the film. However, with its female protagonist, multiple paraspaces and most notably its eclectic visual aesthetics, the film both affirms and undermines its own operations of empowerment. Rather than address unpleasant circumstances head-on, *Sucker Punch* depicts paraspaces and their attendant action very much as dissociated and fantastical. In their reliance upon bricolage and the commodity fetish, these worlds speak to the spatial and social restrictions that the action protagonist experiences in her life outside the paraspaces, even as they ostensibly, fleetingly overcome them.

The film presents three distinct levels nested within each other: in the first, a young woman is imprisoned in a mental institution for the accidental shooting of her sister; in the second, this woman, named Baby Doll, appears to imagine the institution as a bordello from which she must plot an escape; in the third, several action scenarios are played out in a variety of settings, each one a manifestation or re-visualisation of a mundane task being accomplished in the bordello level which will facilitate a break-out (for instance, the theft of a knife is imagined as an assault upon a hover-train on a

[28] Tasker, 1993, p. 161.
[29] Tasker, 1993, p. 117.
[30] Gallagher notes that, as a system, industrialised capitalism 'does not require men to perform spectacular feats of heroic activity on a regular basis, if ever. Within this culture, accounts of survival amid extreme danger affirm the possibility of unmediated experiences of physical punishment and triumph', ameliorating the media consumer for any sensations of guilt arising from not being physically active by providing embodied experiences of such danger and triumph (Gallagher, 2006, p. 22). We therefore live vicariously through the physical acts of our action heroes.

distant planet). These visualisations occur when Baby Doll dances: during her performances those in charge of the bordello are distracted, and it is suggested that the film subjectively enters her unconscious, where she reconfigures her struggle into something more excessive, violent and spectacular. A reading of these sequences as explorations of dissociative behaviour is encouraged, especially considering the final scenes, which reveal Baby Doll herself to be a symptom of another woman's dissociation from reality. The audiences of her dances, moreover, resemble the audience of the film itself: unseen, addressed, titillated by both eroticism and kinetic spectacle but fundamentally divorced from the display – in this way they are described as having the same responses as viewers of a typical action sequence. The dances themselves, as well as their present effect on the spectators when they are taking place, are entirely omitted.

In the second of Baby Doll's visions she finds herself in a vast no man's land in the midst of a violent conflict. The sequence begins by moving in on her reflection in a mirror at the bordello level, a tracking shot around her head then providing a seamless transition between the spaces of the bordello and the warzone. Within the action paraspace, the presence of trenches, blimps, bombed-out churches and explicitly German enemy soldiers all work very obviously to evoke the First World War. However, Baby Doll and her compatriots are armed with late twentieth century machine guns and the sequence is introduced with a modern cover of Jefferson Airplane's hit 'White Rabbit' (here sung by Emiliana Torrini), a song resonant not only for its subject matter of fantasy worlds and evocation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*,[31] but which is also loaded with cultural connections to the Vietnam War and 1960s counter-culture. In addition to these complications of setting, steam-punk technological perversities such as clockwork undead soldiers and a mechanical combat suit capable of flight are present. Digital special effects are used particularly to extend the battlefield in all directions, creating what appears to be a limitless landscape of explosions, smoke, trenches and swarming bi- and tri-planes.

Within this diverse scenography the protagonists cross no man's land, enter enemy trenches and steal a map, killing several dozen zombie soldiers and destroying all manner of aircraft in the process. By contrast, in the bordello level, Baby Doll's dancing is the cover for the (mostly unseen) theft of a map from an administrator's office. The

[31] Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, and, Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* (London: Penguin, 1998).

sequence involves gunfights, swordfights, and numerous explosions, in a manner similar to the other paraspatial action scenes in the film, and it clearly accords with processes of spatial appropriation examined throughout this thesis in Baby Doll and her team's victorious wrestling of control over the trenches, bunker and skies of the paraspace from the enemy (a control which is temporary in that the fantastical space is departed from once it is attained). An analysis of this sequence which focuses upon the particulars of the space, how they are presented and engaged with by the action protagonist, would here be something of a fruitless exercise thanks to the perversely assorted elements involved as well as the status of the sequence as a psychic projection. As such, the examination undertaken here will instead concentrate upon the meta-textual tendencies of the sequence in its presentation of the displaced spatial logic of action sequences themselves, and how this logic is shown to be particularly commodified by this and other sequences in *Sucker Punch*.

Neither historical accuracy nor specificity is sought by the sequence. Instead it presents a vast array of items within its mise-en-scene in the manner of bricolage. The imagination of the sequence evokes Jameson's description of postmodernity, in which the 'past itself has disappeared (along with the well-known "sense of the past" or historicity and collective memory)', elements of it remaining only as 'simulacra', renovated and restored and becoming emblems of the new, rather than of history.[32] The co-existence of iconography drawn from multiple twentieth century wars and the genres of sci-fi, samurai and zombie fiction offers a visualisation of the 'homogenously modernized condition' that Jameson considers to typify the late twentieth century: as seen from a Western viewpoint, 'we are no longer encumbered with the embarrassment of non-simultaneities and non-synchronicities'.[33] Everything can and is happening at once, including that which we represent to ourselves as history, resulting in a 'pure and random play of signifiers […which] ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of preexistent texts, the building blocks of older cultural and social production, in some new and heightened bricolage'.[34] Baby Doll's craving for a space in which her actions are productive of concrete outcomes leads to the generation of an aesthetically eclectic

[32] Jameson, 1991, pp. 309–311.
[33] Jameson, 1991, p. 310. For a respectful critique of Jameson's interpretation of postmodernity as marked by spatial co-existence and temporal flattening, see Massey, 2005, pp. 77–80.
[34] Jameson, 1991, p. 96. In this, Jameson extends a pre-existing understanding (and definition) of postmodern style as a collection of culturally distinct styles being deployed all at once within the same artwork. See, for instance, Harvey's comment that the 'postmodern penchant for jumbling together all manner of references to past styles is one of its more pervasive characteristics' (Harvey, 1994, p. 85).

space imbricated by nostalgic pop cultural forms. This is a clear demonstration of what Leo Charney has termed the 'visible and kinetic externalization of a state of hysteria, directed toward the impossible possession of the present' found in action cinema.[35] The possession of the present is here expressed both in the need to achieve a goal and also in the depiction of a vast repository of cultural images all made present through their contemporaneous existence during the action sequence. In this way, the polyvalence of history and various cultural forms become the singular present of the immediate moment.

The eclecticism of the sequence is far from unique in the film, being present not just in this sequence but also within all the action sequences taken together. These initially seem to be highly differentiated and heterogenous: all utilise different elements of diverse iconography and cultural history (samurai films and weaponry in one, science-fiction worlds and technology in another, Dungeons & Dragons-style role-playing games, in yet another, and so on). They are, however, homogenised through the film's style into a mostly indistinguishable action paraspace of shifting and arbitrary generic codes. Nor are these codes kept apart: a samurai warrior is armed with a mini-gun, robots are killed with swords, and so on. The recurring motifs are more dominant than the overt geographical and quasi-historical settings in which the action takes place. Each sequence occurs during a dance by the protagonist, the sequence itself a fantastical projection of the attainment of a simple goal in the real world. Each sequence involves a briefing by the same unnamed mentor character whose final piece of advice (marked by the dialogue 'one last thing…') is pertinent but ignored. Additionally, all sequences involve a similar set of cinematographic properties, such as colour tinting, special effects, speed-ramping (the speeding up and slowing down of the image in a single shot, achieved digitally), fast editing and rock music. Finally, all these environments, as well as the characters populating them, are united in being inspired by and constructed from a set of pop-cultural forms that are highly commodified.

In quoting these various spaces and scenarios without a logical reason for doing so, *Sucker Punch* effaces their peculiarities and organises them into symbols for the purposes of spectacular attraction. This bricolage, while overtly eclectic and proudly illogical, is so consistently employed, and in such a similar manner in similarly

[35] Leo Charney, 'The Violence of a Perfect Moment', in J. David Slocum (ed), *Violence and American Cinema* (New York & London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 47–62 (p. 49).

structured sequences, that it evokes the 'saturated' and disorienting landscape produced by late capitalism that Jameson analyses.[36] While a previous chapter of this thesis has shown how this can lead to a variety of real-world spaces being flattened into similar sites of surveillance and threat (in the Bourne trilogy and *Jumper*), in *Sucker Punch* interior mental life is shown to be equally influenced by the removal of what Edward S. Casey calls 'places that can serve as lasting scenes of experience and reflection and memory',[37] which are here replaced by spaces of fleeting visual sensation. The 'schizophrenic decentering and dispersion'[38] of these paraspaces represents the logic of difference prompted by capitalist production which both privileges the individual but also assures their position within and subservience to an abstract and totalised system. The spaces presented in the sequences seem to be both highly personalised and entirely commodified.

This use of paraspaces and internal psychological visualisation allows the film to avoid choosing one particular set of aesthetics over another, blending them together at will. The price of this freedom is a surrendering to the commodity form. In this way the 'dramatisation of the social limits of power' which action film narratives commonly express[39] leads not to empowerment but to stasis and imprisonment – Baby Doll is denied the ability to truly master the spaces in which action unfolds, as these spaces are ephemeral and unreal. She is incarcerated throughout the film and seems to still be so at the conclusion, in which she is either revealed to be a coping mechanism created by another character (named Sweat Pea), or retreats into another flight of fantasy, or both. This stasis can be read as a result of her being a female protagonist – as Richard Dyer has pointed out in relation to the action film generally, the '[e]xperience of space has race and gender dimensions which set limits to how plausible or exceptional one may find a representation'.[40] Yet to interpret the film's strategies of aesthetic hysteria as femininely coded and the dissociative operations as gendered limits-to-agency is to neglect a closer examination of *Sucker Punch*'s meta-discourse on action paraspaces themselves.[41] In *Last Action Hero* the subject seeking empowerment and solace in

[36] Jameson, 1991, p. 413.
[37] Casey, 2009, p. xiii.
[38] Jameson, 1991, p. 413.
[39] Tasker, 1993, p. 117.
[40] Dyer, 2000, p. 20.
[41] For an example of this kind of gendered reading in full, see Daniel Walber, '"Sucker Punch": The Failed Feminism of Zack Snyder', *Indiewire*, 25 March 2011 <http://blogs.indiewire.com/spout/sucker-punch-review> [accessed 3 May 2012].

action scenarios was a prepubescent child; though Baby Doll is older, her treatment within the narrative as well as her very name accentuate her child-like qualities and her custodial position in the social hierarchy, not to mention constructing her as a cipher rather than a fleshed-out character. The action paraspaces she manifests are both a redefinition of the 'social limits of power' she experiences and also a reaffirmation of them, since they underscore her inability to manifest change in her immediate (real) surroundings. The narrative may position her as a person in need of empowerment, but this is a character facet also common to children (in *Last Action Hero*) and even muscular, adult men: as Gallagher has noted, *True Lies* grapples with and dramatises a felt loss of control for men in the social sphere and displaces this cultural anxiety into spectacular action. The spatialising operations of *Sucker Punch* must therefore be seen as pertinent to the genre as a whole.

As well as being an action film, *Sucker Punch* is a mind-game film, in that it is generally unconcerned with presenting 'indexical, realistic representations', but rather creates an aesthetic style that is 'symptomatic for [*sic*] wider changes in the culture's way with moving images and virtual worlds', as Thomas Elsaesser describes the form.[42] Mind-game films offer puzzles at the level of narrative, detailing events out of chronological order or with vital information hidden so as to conceal the precise nature of the story and plot from the viewer. The purposefully perplexing strategies at work in these films, Elsaesser suggests, are reflective of contemporary cultural changes:

> new technologies of storage, retrieval, and sorting, such as the ones provided so readily and relatively cheaply by the computer or internet servers, will in due course engender and enable new forms of 'narrative,' which is to say, other ways of sequencing and 'linking' data than that of the story, centered on single characters, and with a beginning, a middle, and an ending.[43]

Films which fit the rubric of the mind-game film might then be seen to work to train the senses for the social matrix of 'affective labor' in the twenty-first century.[44]

Elsaesser's work here follows Walter Benjamin's model of cinema, the latter describing it as 'the art form that is in keeping with the increased threat to his life which modern

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[42] Thomas Elsaesser, 'The Mind-Game Film', in Warren Buckland (ed), *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 13–41 (p. 39).
[43] Elsaesser, 2009, p. 22.
[44] Elseasser, 2009, p. 32. He takes the phrase 'affective labor' from Hardt & Negri's *Empire* (2000).

man has to face'. The medium of film, Benjamin goes on, 'corresponds to profound changes in the apperceptive apparatus – changes that are experienced on an individual scale' by the subject in modern society.[45] For him, film buffered the shocks to the body wrought by the technological and bureaucratic machines of modernity in the early twentieth century, and in a related manner Elsaesser seems to suggest that mind-game films train the senses for the mental shocks and affective disarray of a highly technologised twenty-first century life. This sensorium is influenced by computer software: as Lev Manovich states, the operations of software 'become part of how we understand ourselves, others, and the world', meaning that our '[s]trategies of working with computer data become our general cognitive strategies'.[46] The spatialisation of cultural forms and subjective psychology identified by Manovich and Elsaesser are an effect of the 'infinite flat surface' of new media data organisation upon its users, as 'time [becomes] a flat image or a landscape, something to look at or navigate through'.[47]

In *Sucker Punch*, this spatialisation is linked to both achievement (navigation through space equals success) but also futility, as the sequences show a physical agency and assertiveness that Baby Doll does not possess in the Bordello. The spaces in which the action occurs are vital cognitive operations in her mental life, allowing her to cope, but their ecstatic bricolage and fantasy emphasise that they offer no real solutions. Moreover, the film's use of widely varying cultural forms works to demonstrate how Baby Doll's visual language of power is entirely borrowed. This is a phenomenon that is widely diagnosed within cultural theory. In Lefebvre's model of global urbanisation, which is to be understood more as a condition than a concrete material arrangement (and is a forerunner of his concept of abstract space), 'the urban *accumulates* all content', bringing together 'things, objects, people, situations' that are mutually exclusive but homogenised through their uniform reliance upon commodity capitalism.[48] Personal communication and definition of any sort must therefore use these commodified forms. This condition is analysed by Michel de Certeau, who has

[45] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', Harry Zohn (trans.), in Leo Braudy & Marshall Cohen (eds), *Film Theory and Criticism*, 6th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 791–811 (p. 808 (f/n 19)).
[46] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (London & Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2001), p. 118.
[47] Manovich, 2001, pp. 77–78.
[48] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, Robert Bononno (trans.) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 119, emphasis in original.

shown how the individual subverts the monolithic influence of these systems and their strategies through minor tactical acts.[49] Manovich describes this aspect of *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

> As de Certeau points out, in modern societies most of the objects that people use in their everyday lives are mass-produced goods; these goods are the expressions of strategies of designers, producers, and marketers. *People build their worlds* and identities out of these readily available objects by using different tactics: bricolage, assembly, customization.[50]

However, for Manovich, since de Certeau's writing 'companies have developed strategies that mimic people's tactics of bricolage, reassembly, and remix', and 'consumer and culture industries have started to systematically turn every subculture […] into products. In short,' he goes on, 'people's cultural tactics [are] turned into strategies now sold to them'.[51] Going slightly further, Jameson states that 'cultural resistance', 'guerilla warfare' and 'political interventions' of any kind today 'are all somehow secretly disarmed and reabsorbed by a system of which they themselves might well be considered a part, since they can achieve no distance from it'.[52]

For de Certeau and Jameson, identity can be fashioned only from products legitimised by corporate capital, because these are all that is available. In addition, the prevailing economic mode of production disconnects the individual from the product of their labour, if this labour has a tangible product at all, further alienating them from the world in which they live and act. Jameson speaks of the feeling of 'impotence', the 'pall on the psyche', and the 'gradual loss of interest in the self and the outside world' that are the consequences of the 'condition of non-productivity' prevalent in contemporary socio-cultural life. He suggests that this alienation is inevitably 'dealt with' in a process that, 'acknowledging its persistence and inevitability, disguises, represses, displaces, and sublimates a persistent and fundamental powerlessness': that is, the process of consumerism.[53] Equated with powerlessness, consumerism compels the subject to disguise and displace this lack of power through commodity purchase. These circumstances are then expressed in cultural products in a manner that makes, say, a

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[49] De Certeau, 1988, pp. 29–30, p. 98.
[50] Lev Manovich, 'The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life: From Mass Consumption to Mass Cultural Production?', *Critical Inquiry* 35.2 (Winter 2009), pp. 319–331 (p. 322, emphasis added).
[51] Manovich, 2009, p. 324.
[52] Jameson, 1991, p. 49.
[53] Jameson, 1991, p. 316.

blockbuster Hollywood mind-game film in some ways a realistic representation of contemporary experience:

> The distorted and unreflexive attempts of newer cultural production to explore and to express this new space must then also, in their own fashion, be considered as so many approaches to the representation of (a new) reality [...They can] be read as peculiar new forms of realism (or at least of the mimesis of reality), while at the same time they can equally well be analyzable as so many attempts to distract and divert us from that reality or to disguise its contradictions and resolve them in the guise of various formal mystifications.[54]

The action sequences of *Sucker Punch* are dissociative exercises dealing with the powerlessness Baby Doll feels. The wider narrative levels (the movement between the mental institution level and bordello level) call attention to these strategies of empowerment while also reflecting the spatialised, rhizomatic elements of lived experience that Jameson, Elseasser and others identify. The paraspace device is here, then, a spatial expression of felt spatial dissociation.

The action sequences manifest the impact of the contemporary 'condition of non-productivity' Jameson mentions and the 'felt loss of control' described by Gallagher through their clear spatial segregation from the rest of the narrative, indicating how spaces produced for productive action might be understood as inherently fantastic and spectacular in corporately controlled (real) space. In this they reflect cultural changes identified within theories of the postmodern: as Bukatman indicates, in such conditions, '[n]ew modes of experience have not yet fully arisen to ground and explain the subject within these new realities', and any textual practice that does attempt to represent them will involve the disappearance of the subject as a coherent site of exploration, 'to be replaced by worlds and zones whose rules of functioning are precisely *not* to be determined'.[55] This is the situation found in *Sucker Punch*, Baby Doll far less a subject of attention than the spaces in which she moves, which are clearly subjective to an outlandish degree. The spatial control particular to action sequences and clearly demonstrated within these spaces is a form of empowering address, but the narrative of explicit dissociative operations equates this empowerment with a childish desire for wish fulfilment. The loss of history leads to the frenetic present of paraspatial action and the simultaneous assertion and disavowal of spatial and cultural agency. The only

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[54] Jameson, 1991, p. 49.
[55] Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 164, emphasis in original.

space that Baby Doll can appropriate is that of her own mind, and her ability to generate meaning, history and memory in this space is lacking. The action sequences in the film therefore interrogate their own logic and come to pessimistic conclusions, something expressed in particular through the paraspace device.

Inception – Consumerist Paraspaces

The concept of the paraspace is vital to an investigation of the action genre and the action sequence not just because many such films depend upon the bracketing operations described by the motif, but also because such films can also operate themselves *as* paraspaces – playing through and resolving the problems of the real world in the form of spectacle. In *Sucker Punch* these displays are staged within highly diverse environments, which are nonetheless tonally and narratively homogenous, echoing the conditions of commodity capitalism. Space is produced through bricolage and spectacle in order to provide psychological solace to the individual, action sequences within these spaces furthermore providing an empowerment predicated on spatial control. *Inception* similarly describes the strategies at play in the production of space in late capitalism, and also examines these using the paraspace of the unconscious. Though its content and aesthetics appear to be very different to *Sucker Punch*, it likewise shows the impacts of post-Fordism and postmodernity upon the psyche. However, it more rigorously expresses the purposes of the created paraspaces and their commodity logic, indicating in the process that the unconscious is now manifestly regulated by corporate entities. While for Marx it was true that people 'make their own history, but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted',[56] it can also be claimed that people make their own mental spaces, but in circumstances that are dictated by exteriorly imposed and inherited spatial imaginations. This is the situation depicted by *Inception*.

The film is a heist thriller with a science-fiction conceit. Ideas are stolen by teams of well-trained criminals who are able to enter the dreaming mind of their 'mark' and manipulate the space and content of their dreams, in doing so tricking this mark into revealing the location and or substance of what is sought, which is itself an idea, code or

[56] Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', David Fernbach (trans.), in *Surveys from Exile: Political Writings, Volume 2* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), pp. 143–249 (p. 146).

memorised piece of information rather than a material object. A seasoned thief, Cobb, is recruited to perform what is described as a far more difficult task: incepting an idea, rather than stealing one. He enlists the help of Arthur, his right-hand man, and Ariadne, a dream-architect, among others. Complications arise when it is revealed that the mind of the subject to be incepted (the heir to a massive corporate empire, named Fischer) has been trained to resist incursion, resulting in near-constant attacks within his dreaming mental landscape by effectively faceless henchmen. In addition to this, Cobb's deceased wife Mal (present as an echo, or wraith, within his unconscious) continually upsets the smooth running of the crime. As the film proceeds, characters travel into dreams within dreams, each of these cross-cut with one another. An analysis of the spaces of the dreams, their coding as spaces of white male corporate power, and finally a reading of the film as a mall-like paraspace of consumer-oriented satisfaction will show *Inception* to narrate the production of abstract space, indicating that this space and its workings have become fundamental to psychological operations in late capitalism.

In line with McHale's words on the motif of the paraspace, *Inception* offers an extended reflection on world-making, bringing into view 'the "worldness" of the world [presented]' and offering opportunities 'for reflecting concretely on world-making itself'.[57] Some critics accordingly understand the film as an allegory of filmmaking – it is 'a movie about the shared dream of movies' for Sam Adams,[58] while Devin Faraci sees protagonist Cobb as a synecdoche of the film's director Christopher Nolan.[59] Like *Sucker Punch*, *Inception* provides a metafictional reflection upon the procedures of filmmaking and action film narratives through its use of the paraspace device, functioning as a site where real world conflicts involving loss of agency can be worked through. Action films create and present spaces of excitement and thrill; while in *Sucker Punch* these were divorced from logic and history, *Inception* shows the process of such creation and presentation to be highly logical, as it depicts the generation and navigation of separate spaces of spectacle that can be successfully navigated and tightly controlled.[60]

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[57] McHale, 1992, p. 253.

[58] Sam Adams, 'Everything You Wanted to Know About "Inception"', *Salon*, 19 July 2010 <http://www.salon.com/2010/07/19/inception_explainer/> [accessed 18 December 2012].

[59] Devin Faraci, 'Never Wake Up: The Secret and Meaning of Inception', *Cinematic Happenings Under Development*, 19 July 2010 <http://www.chud.com/24477/never-wake-up-the-meaning-and-secret-of-inception/> [accessed 18 December 2012].

[60] David Bordwell points out that 'the separate dreams rely on familiar action-movie conventions: the car chase that ends with a plunge into space, the fight in a hotel corridor, the assault on a fortress, and so

In a related manner, *Inception* also indicates the pervasiveness of corporate culture, a culture that extends into the unconscious mental landscapes depicted. This influence works to make the spaces presented as 'real' and as 'dreams' similar to each other, as both express capitalist logics. For Mark Fisher, this confusion is a common feature of Nolan's work, his films grappling with a 'general ontological indeterminacy, in which the nature of the whole fictional world [of the film] is put into doubt'.[61] Such doubt, something of a condition of cinema and the image in the digital age, and particularly so within action and spectacle cinema, is here developed into a problematic presentation of the effect of abstract space (and generic Hollywood plotting) upon the contemporary individual's unconscious. Fisher suggests that in the film the mind is 'a militarized zone', and that the metaphysical questioning invited in the first half of *Inception* is later jettisoned for disappointing chase sequences.[62] Referencing the corporate language and aesthetic of the film, he states that

> *Inception* is less a meta-meditation on the power of cinema than, more interestingly, a reflection of the way in which cinematic techniques have become imbricated into a banal spectacle which – fusing business machismo, entertainment protocols, and breathless hype – enjoys an unprecedented dominion over our working lives and our dreaming minds.[63]

Beyond the 'cinematic techniques' Fisher mentions, the depictions of space in *Inception* are akin to Marc Augé's descriptions of contemporary 'non-places', the film inhabiting a series of environments that 'cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity',[64] any local colour or regional particularisation being quite literally manufactured, and analogous to the facile differentiation provided by travel agency catalogues.[65] The creation of non-places is for Augé a way of coping with the changes to perceptions of time and space wrought by late capitalism, but in doing so these spaces also produce 'entirely new experiences and ordeals of solitude'.[66] For Lefebvre,

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on'. 'Nolan vs. Nolan', *Observations on Film Art*, 19 August 2012 <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2012/08/19/nolan-vs-nolan/> [accessed 4 October 2012]. Adams stresses that the film is not about dreams, but rather artificial constructs, 'rational, rectilinear simulacra designed to achieve specific ends', their own spectacle tied to the financial constraints and pressures of a $200 million blockbuster (2010).

[61] Mark Fisher, 'The Lost Unconscious: Delusions and Dreams in *Inception*', *Film Quarterly* 64.3 (Spring 2011), pp. 37–45 (p. 37).

[62] Fisher, 2011, pp. 39–40.

[63] Fisher, 2011, p. 41, emphasis in original.

[64] Augé, 1995, pp. 77–78.

[65] Augé, 1995, p. 110.

[66] Augé, 1995, p. 93.

these are abstract spaces, 'materialized, mechanized and technicized' spaces designed to be both easily readable and mystifying in their concealment of the real, corporate mechanisms of power that exist in space.[67] This kind of spatial logic, as shown previously, 'erases distinctions'[68] and 'tends toward homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences'.[69]

The environments the film presents are slick and bland, elements of economic and military infrastructure and expressions of faceless networks of capital. Within the extended finale of the film, the spaces in which the characters move, in order that they are revealed (or nested) are: the first class cabin of an airplane; the streets, warehouses and highways of a metropolis; a slick corporate hotel; a military base upon a mountaintop; and another metropolis, this one marginally more sprawling and alienating than the previous one. As in the Bourne trilogy, these spaces are presented homogenously: scenes in the airplane cabin and also in Mombasa – which ostensibly take place in the 'real world' – share the abstract and instrumental properties of the dreamspaces. That these locations have similar aesthetic properties is stressed by the action sequences, which fail to distinguish between them in style and content. A shootout and foot chase in 'real world' Mombasa is filmed in an identical manner to the action sequences within dream worlds, including faceless armed enemies in suits, rapid editing and handheld camerawork, and also features a moment in which Cobb squeezes himself between two restricting walls that almost seem to be moving in on one another. The sequence is halted implausibly when he runs into his benefactor and is whisked instantly to safety. The similarities of the real and paraspatial worlds are aesthetically foregrounded throughout, something the film itself alludes to when Mal suggests Cobb's waking and dreaming lives are indistinguishable.

As a result, the spatial strategies in both worlds can be read as analogous to one another. For Fisher, the irony at the centre of *Inception* is the positioning of 'inception' itself – the implanting of an idea so deep that a subject takes it for their own – as a near-impossible task, when it is in truth the continually achieved founding principle of consumer-led capitalist societies. The film demonstrates how

[67] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 313.
[68] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 49.
[69] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 52.

> business has closed down not only the strangeness of the unconscious, but also, even more disturbingly, any possibility of an outside – a situation that *Inception* exemplifies, rather than comments on. You yearn for foreign places, but everywhere you go looks like local color for the film set of a commercial; you want to be lost in Escheresque mazes, but you end up in an interminable car chase.[70]

The internal mental spaces of the characters are subjected to the logics of abstract space in the same way as their material lives. As Fisher suggests, there is 'nothing alien, no *other place*' in the film, just the 'arcades and hotel corridors' of 'globalized capital'.[71] Augé's comment that non-places can arise anywhere should in this context be read in relation to Jameson's assertion that late capitalism effaces differences and 'eliminates the enclaves of precapitalist organization' by colonising and absorbing them with the commodity form.[72] Such enclaves include the unconscious. For Lefebvre too this colonising process is necessary for the consolidation of corporate operations: 'the production of "mental spaces" composed of popular representations of state power and its associated geographies' are no less crucial to the maintenance of the capitalist system in Lefebvre's model than is the production of material space.[73] The words of Elsaesser and Manovich cited above indicate how this process can be seen to continue presently, the social matrix of 'affective labor'[74] internalising 'general cognitive strategies'[75] associated with computer data and global communication networks.

The full extent and value of this internal adaptation to corporatised experience by the individual is expressed in an action sequence near the middle of the film, as Arthur demonstrates his spatial competency. In a dream-within-a-dream, he fights with several assailants in the corridors of a corporate hotel. Due to events outside this paraspace, the corridor tilts wildly, before completely rotating several times. In a spectacular shot, the camera remains generally static while the combatants tumble around the space, from floor to wall to ceiling and back again, an effect achieved by rotating both camera and corridor. Arthur expresses no disquiet or panic at this instability. Unflappable in face and gesture, he overpowers his attackers. He is able to keep his footing during the groundswells and unpredictably shifting territory of contemporary spatial practice,

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[70] Fisher, 2011, p. 45, emphasis in original.
[71] Fisher, 2011, p. 45, emphasis in original.
[72] Jameson, 1991, p. 36.
[73] Brenner & Elden, 2009a, p. 21.
[74] Elsaesser, 2009, p. 32.
[75] Manovich, 2001, p. 118.

manifested in the glossy, anonymous space of the up-market hotel. His primary assailant in this sequence, a slightly older black male, is unable to maintain equilibrium and is overcome.[76] This is Arthur's space: the space of the white corporate middle-class, his ability to transform it into one of Gallagher's 'emblem[s] of masculinity and control'[77] shown through spectacular action.

Arthur's control here is linked to the team's ability to command space generally. Earlier dream sequences show Arthur creating a paradoxical staircase and Ariadne folding a Parisian landscape back upon itself.[78] In these experiments, as well as the design of the hotel in which the fight takes place, the team shows their ability to create places like Jameson's description of the Bonaventure Hotel. These are (near) hermetically-sealed worlds, the entryways 'lateral and rather backdoor affairs', the interior architecture confusing to the point of distraction.[79] Crucially, both the Bonaventure and *Inception*'s dream hotel share an imperative to problematise 'the language of volume or volumes' through their strategies of totalisation and unmappability: the latter is full of paradoxes to make it appear as though it is a larger, fuller space than it is; so, it seems for Jameson, is the Bonaventure.[80] Arthur is totally confident in this environment, underlining not only that the subject most suited to navigating and profiting from the 'hyperspace'[81] of contemporary culture is a member of the corporate caste, but also his own status as a producer of space rather than a mystified consumer of it (the latter being represented in the film by Fischer). The spaces of the dreams, then, and in much the same manner as *Sucker Punch*, echo spatial developments in contemporary culture, particularly those associated with the term postmodernism. Like Baby Doll, Arthur and Cobb produce or assist in producing the spaces in which they stage their conflicts. In the late 1990s, Fred Pfeil describes action protagonists as being able to 'get *behind* the surfaces' of their economic spaces, accessing the unseen infrastructure of capitalist architecture.[82] In the

[76] On the film's presentation of race, it is necessary to note that the major non-white characters are less sure-footed than their white counterparts: Sato (played by Japanese actor Ken Watanabe) is shot early on in the inception mission, while Yusuf (Asian actor Dileep Rao) is the least sure-footed, flipping the van containing the team within his own dream.
[77] Gallagher, 2006, p. 60.
[78] The team are, however, unable to control non-spatial elements such as individuals (Fischer, the projections, Mal's wraith), weather (the rain in the first nested level is vocally complained about), or indeed time.
[79] Jameson, 1991, p. 39.
[80] Jameson, 1991, p. 43.
[81] Jameson, 1991, p. 44.
[82] Pfeil, 1998, p. 173, emphasis in original.

films examined here, the protagonists go further, through the paraspace device creating their own unconscious spaces, spaces behind the surface of material life itself.

In *Inception* these mental spaces are then depicted as motivated and rational constructs for the accomplishment of a business strategy: the film shows space to be crucial to the commodity system, necessary for the adoption, or selling, of an idea, working in both ephemeral and concrete ends towards this goal. Lefebvre warns against theories that presume mental space to be 'extra-ideological' and which take Enlightenment-dictated values as objective and unquestionable. In doing so, and using 'would-be scientific credentials', an ideological tendency 'express[es], in an admirably unconscious manner, those dominant ideas which are perforce the ideas of the dominant class':

> The established 'culture' reaps a double benefit from this manoeuvre: in the first place, the impression is given that the truth is tolerated, or even promoted, by that 'culture'; secondly, a multitude of small events occur within this mental space which can be exploited for useful or polemical ends.[83]

Mental space, influenced by Cartesian scientific discourse announcing itself as objectively true and correct, therefore develops a kinship with the space 'inhabited by the technocrats in their silent offices'.[84] Moreover, it becomes increasingly hidden from view as it becomes more normalised, leading to the 'privation' of an everyday life in which subjective spatial experience is devalued.[85]

This process of mirroring interior psychology with technocratic commodity logic is displayed in *Inception*, which also expresses – through the procedure of colonisation itself – a particular interpretation of globalisation. Discussing the new economic, social and cultural order that he understands to be brought about by developments in globalised transportation and communication, Jameson suggests that

> [in] the displacement of national literature by international or American bestsellers, in the collapse of a national film industry under the weight of Hollywood, of national television flooded by US imports, in the closing down of local cafés and restaurants as the fast-food giants move in, the deeper and more intangible effects of globalization on daily life can first and most dramatically be seen.[86]

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[83] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 6.
[84] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 6.
[85] On this privation, see Lefebvre, 2002, pp. 335–339.
[86] Jameson, 2000, pp. 66–67.

Drawing on such comments, it may not be coincidental that scenes that take place in Paris in *Inception* involve the unmotivated folding and manipulating of the city's urban make-up. The local café in which Cobb and Ariadne find themselves is quickly blown apart when their presence within it is focused upon, revealing the scene to be a dream. Within the unconscious depicted by *Inception*, the Americanisation of globalisation is indicated, as Fisher has suggested, through the use of Hollywood action film aesthetics and plotting. Local colour and Escheresque mazes become flattened and stultified by the logics of the American entertainment system both beyond the conscious mind and within it, the mental production of spatial imagination proceeding through the determinants of abstract space as much as does the production of material space.

The purpose of the dreamspaces constructed within *Inception* is profit, and while Cobb and Arthur are presented as spatially confident and competent, the film also focuses upon the spatial experience of the individual being profited from. Though an incredibly powerful CEO, Fischer is repositioned by the film as a consumer, and a subject of motivated therapy, which are conflated into one. Cobb and the other corporate thieves provide a series of differentiated spaces all geared towards creating excitement in order to ready their subject for the 'purchase' of an idea. In doing this, they employ the logics of shopping mall designers. Anne Friedberg has written extensively on the intersection of cinematic spectatorship and the visual pleasures offered by the mall, suggesting that they produce similar subjectivities geared around pleasure, purchase and gratification.[87] For Jon Goss, who explicitly brings Lefebvre into his discussion of the mall, these are created purposefully as 'pseudoplaces', predicated on 'spatial strategies of dissemblance and duplicity', and work to 'assuage [the] collective guilt over conspicuous consumption'. The mall generates a 'fantasized dissociation from the act of shopping' in the consumer.[88] Furthermore, while malls may outwardly emphasise legibility in their presentation of maps and visible storefronts, they hide their spatial operations in plain sight: as Lefebvre makes clear with regards to abstract space, 'the impression of intelligibility conceals far more than it reveals'.[89] Such concealment defines spaces that are 'produced in order to be read and grasped' rather than lived in a particular context,

[87] Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 111–125.
[88] Jon Goss, 'The "Magic of the Mall": An Analysis of Form, Function, and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83.1 (March 1993), pp. 18–47 (p. 19).
[89] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 144.

and he sees in such designed spaces a deep-seated dishonesty: 'spaces made (produced) to be read are the most deceptive and tricked-up imaginable. The graphic impression of readability', he goes on, 'is a sort of *trompe-l'oeil* concealing strategic intentions and actions'.[90] Moreover, for Goss and Friedberg, the designers of shopping spaces have learned from the mechanics and consumer-attraction strategies of cinema and television. Like 'cinematic spectatorship, the mall relies on a perceptual displacement; it defers external realities, retailing instead a controlled, commodified, and pleasurable substitution'.[91] The mall provides 'drama, excitement, and constant visual stimulation', while also allowing viewers/visitors 'to be simultaneously in multiple times and places' by creating 'a diverse range of temporal and spatial experiences within a comfortable landscape for consumption', all of which trap their users within a commodity system rather than offering a clear route out.[92]

Inception provides not only Fischer but also its viewer with a range of spatial experiences in various paraspaces, from rotating corridors to ice fortresses and limitless, crumbling metropolises; it also offers temporal variety in the use of different extremes of slow-motion when cross-cutting between dream levels. Like mall developers, Cobb and his team create a space which functions as a commodity and from which they seek to profit, but they obscure this goal through their deployment of aesthetically pleasing and constantly shifting representations of space. Following Lefebvre's writing on abstract space, Goss describes the mall as 'a space conceptualized, planned scientifically and realized through strict technical control, pretending to be a space imaginatively created by its inhabitants'. Microcosms of wider spatial strategies at work in contemporary culture, malls intend to appear as though 'created by the spontaneous, individual tactics of everyday life', but in truth operate 'under the calculus of retail profit' and social control.[93] As with abstract space, therefore, they work towards 'the reduction of the "real" […] to a "plan"',[94] relying on spectacle to engage their users. This is endemic of the 'functioning of capitalism' in Lefebvre's view, which 'contrives to be blatant and covert at one and the same time'.[95] So too the dreams designed by Cobb, Ariadne and company dupe their subject into thinking he is able to choose his

[90] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 143, emphasis in original.
[91] Friedberg, 1994, p. 122.
[92] Goss, 1993, p. 39.
[93] Goss, 1993, p. 40.
[94] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 287.
[95] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 49.

own path when in reality it has been carefully circumscribed and ordered for him in advance. The narrative makes clear that the dreamspaces are clearly planned and technically controlled (as much as they can be), even if to Fischer they are presented as imaginative and personal constructions. Through them, Fischer is lured into a psychological state in which he can be manipulated into buying an idea, despite the complete absence of his intentions to do so prior to entering the mall-like dream levels.

Fischer's eventual emotional catharsis, though genuine, is reached in accordance with the instrumental imperative of the seemingly diverse spaces through which he has moved, and so should be seen as akin to a contemporary commodity which, once attained, allows the consumer to communicate their own identity, but only on terms dictated by the commodity itself and the system of which it forms a part. The constant barrage of action that accompanies Fischer's journey and its fulfilment echoes the anxiety of the shopping experience: rather than relaxed *flanerie*, the contemporary consumer is breathlessly pressured into partaking of the commodity system.[96] In *Inception* this takes the form of a lengthy concluding action set-piece which lasts for thirty minutes or so, and encourages an audience to view it as a single unified sequence (albeit one set over numerous dream levels) through concurrent editing and only trivial pauses during the onslaught of gunfights, chases and physical combat. Moreover, if Fischer's cathartic journey is overtly the subject of the narrative, the explicit descriptions of this process calls attention to the seemingly more genuine, character-oriented catharsis experienced by Cobb, as he comes to terms with his wife's death thanks to the pressure of similar strategies of action-oriented, instrumental emotional realisations.

The mall, the dreamspaces created in *Inception*, and the film itself, then, are abstract spaces that subject the individual to spectacle and place them under pressure, conditioning them to act and think in a certain way.[97] The slippage that has occurred in this analysis between the impact of Cobb's team's actions on Fischer, and the operations of *Inception* itself, is demonstrative of the film's metonymic qualities. The

[96] This pressure is described in Goss, 1993, p. 35.

[97] Fischer's own inception is contrasted with Cobb's inception of his wife Mal, which leads her to kill herself: planting the idea that her world was not real when they were trapped in a subconscious limbo, the idea is never eradicated and Mal's subsequent ontological ungrounding leads her to kill herself in the (supposedly) real world. Mal's lingering emptiness is akin to the constant deferred gratification prompted in the contemporary consumer by commodity culture.

viewer is subjected by the filmmakers to the same strategies of spectacle, visual onslaught and emotional engagement as Fischer is by the inception team. Showing processes of spatial creation determined by the logics of abstract space in a format equally built upon those logics, the film cleaves closely to Jameson's assertion that 'aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally', and that 'this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world'.[98]

Yet this demonstration itself serves to potentially make this domination visible. In its use of the conventions of the mind-game film (including an indefinite ending which suggests the entire film may have been Cobb's dream) and through staging these using the paraspace motif, *Inception* offers a 'metafictional reflection *by* the text on its own ontological procedures'.[99] This reflection, when considering *Inception* itself as a paraspace, broadens into an appreciation of the real lived experience of the viewer. As Bukatman notes, paraspaces 'redefine and extend the realms of experience and human definition in contradistinction to the possibilities inherent in normal space'.[100] As a film about paraspaces, and a paraspace itself, *Inception* has the capacity to extend the realm of experience into the mystified, abstract spaces of contemporary life. In this it is typical of the action genre and action sequence as it is understood by this thesis, as such sequences engage with and interrogate the realities and complexities of real built space today, as well as representing heightened – and therefore more visible – versions of prevailing spatial imaginations. The staging of action sequences within these environments moreover extends the possibilities inherent in normal space through presentations of its appropriation and control. The corporate non-places generated by the logics of both abstract space as it is described by Lefebvre and postmodernism as it is defined by Jameson are appropriated by the characters of *Inception* for their own purposes, even if these purposes correspond to the same general logics as the bureaucratic arrangements they seek to subvert. But the translation of anxieties surrounding these logics into the spectacular 'visual space' of action cinema, to build on Gallagher's model, is here not only a way of coping with a felt loss of control in the real

[98] Jameson, 1991, pp. 4–5.
[99] McHale, 1992, p. 253, emphasis in original.
[100] Bukatman, 1992, p. 210.

world.[101] The presentation of this process also reveals the corporate 'contouring' of contemporary spatial existence normally ignored or forgotten.[102] This revelation is further stressed by the ontological *mise-en-abyme* of both the mind-game film form and the paraspace motif.

Chapter Conclusion

The multiplication and similarity of the paraspaces presented by on the one hand *Inception* and on the other *Sucker Punch* substantiate not just Lefebvre's words on the homogeneity sought by abstract space, but also Jameson's comment that in postmodernism 'depth is replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces'.[103] These spaces – interactive, controlled, commodity-motivated – are surfaces assembled from whatever elements would suit, without recourse to logic or historical contingency. Cobb describes this bricolage when introducing his and Mal's residence in limbo, a cosy and informal apartment within a sleek tower block: 'we both wanted to live in a house but we loved this type of building: in the real world we'd have to choose, but not here.' As in the mall, a 'diverse range of temporal and spatial experiences' are offered to the consumer simultaneously, both films using the paraspace device to feature a wide range of locations and situations.[104] However, this diversity is only a cover for the unified homogeneity of instrumental and dissociative space. The manner of spatial production Lefebvre identifies in the state apparatus is here found to inhabit the mental life of the subject. Variety may be abundant, but it offers no escape. In the post-literate world of late capitalism all styles can be chosen from by the consumer, but only because any radical or inherently meaningful potential within them has, for Jameson, been lost.[105]

In *Inception* and *Sucker Punch* the use of various styles in spatially distinct paraspaces divorces these spaces from the real world and so makes their presentations of physical capability and spatial mastery into overt fantasies. *Sucker Punch* expresses hysterical, hyperbolic spatial productions for the purposes of empowerment; *Inception* reveals contemporary mental space as a production of corporate logics for corporate ends. In both instances paraspaces are explicitly productive of particular sought outcomes (even

[101] Gallagher, 2006, p. 45.
[102] Bukatman, 1992, p. 214.
[103] Jameson, 1991, p. 12.
[104] Goss, 1993, p. 39.
[105] Jameson, 1991, p. 17.

if both films conclude in suggested limbo-states, the protagonists perhaps remaining stuck within paraspaces even though they seek freedom from them). They therefore allegorise and spatialise the logic of action films themselves. As do action films generally, the uses of paraspaces here reference present day anxieties within a spectacular arena of conflict and resolve them, substantiating the central proposition of this thesis: namely, that the action genre, typified by its action sequences, is something of an exaggerated visualisation of our own tactics of spatial appropriation. Additionally, the paraspaces both featured within action cinema, and by extension the paraspace that *is* action cinema itself, function to show the process of world-making required by such a cinema, creating a space of spectacle which compensates for a perceived loss of power elsewhere. The 'fantasies of empowerment' in action films, as Purse has indicated, 'allow us to rehearse our own dreamed-of escapes, our own becoming-masterful, in a fantasy context'[106] – but they remain a dream and a fantasy.

The mental spatial productions depicted in *Sucker Punch* and *Inception* reveal that the operations of abstract space have burrowed deep into the mental life of the characters in the films. Action sequences play out across a range of different paraspaces for the purposes of psychological realisation, the narrative and approach to mise-en-scene dominated by the commodity fetish and the signs of consumer culture. In calling attention to these through delirium, *Sucker Punch* indicates the complications involved in an action-oriented escape into paraspace; in homogenising them through corporatism, *Inception* works to efface such complications. In both cases, the spatial strategies on display can be seen to confirm what Tasker has described as the 'social limits of power' with which the action film deals,[107] these limits only being overcome in a temporary, spectacular fashion. Nonetheless, paraspaces and action cinema, and paraspaces *in* action cinema, bring the spatial production of contemporary capitalism into view, something further achieved by digital special effects, the subject of the next chapter.

[106] Purse, 2011, p. 45.
[107] Tasker, 1993, p. 117.

Chapter 5: Digital Space

Throughout the 1990s, digital special effects became 'increasingly ubiquitous and frequently exhibitionistic' in action cinema,[1] and their use has important consequences for the way in which action sequences produce space. They are part of series of 'barriers to entry'[2] that help Hollywood studios maintain their leading position in the worldwide film market, since they are often the only companies able to financially afford the standard of effects to which audiences have become accustomed. Digital effects are seen to have a variety of consequences for cinematic style, examined by a range of writers, only some of which shall be investigated in this chapter. The primary focus here will be upon the way these digital special effects change the presentation of both the spaces of action sequences as well as the body that populates these spaces, and how these changes might be understood as part of a regime of visual mastery and control that, for Henri Lefebvre, underpins abstract space. This will involve an appreciation of how the kinetic and bodily aspects of action sequences interact with the standardising and disembodying procedures that can be seen at work within such effects. How does the use of digital technology impact upon the processes of spatial appropriation, place-making, and spatial bracketing previously identified by this thesis to be central to the ways in which action sequences represent space?

Many writers suggest that digital effects sever the indexical link between film and real space. The 'digital moving image is not an impression of reality, but the transcription of light into immaterial binary code', suggests one.[3] This produces images that might be described as 'hyperplastic' and 'postfilmic' (even if they are 'realistic'), and such images are 'often interpreted as being opposed to indexicality', writes another.[4] For Mark Gallagher, these effects create a schism between character and space, as 'bluescreened, greenscreened, and digitally simulated action sequences literally separate their […] stars from their surrounding environments'.[5] Sean Cubitt suggests that digital cinema specifically involves a loss of ontological connection between film and reality, digital images eradicating 'an ideological structure to social meaning' because they 'no

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[1] Purse, 2011, p. 21.
[2] King, 2000, p. 68.
[3] Fisher, 2009, p. 176.
[4] Stacey Abbott, 'Final Frontiers: Computer-Generated Imagery and the Science Fiction Film', *Science Fiction Studies* 33.1 (Mar 2006), pp. 89–108 (p. 98).
[5] Gallagher, 2006, p. 15.

longer pretend[…] to represent the world': 'Digital media do not refer. They communicate'.[6] This kind of image-capture can therefore be thought of as being opposed to the school of film theory following André Bazin – which sees film as the chemical reproduction of profilmic, physically existing spaces and individuals using a camera apparatus that functions in the manner of a window or screen, providing the viewer with a connection to a concrete, documented occurrence. By removing the strict necessity of a profilmic referent, digital media production for these writers contributes to (and is reflective of) a wider cultural phenomenon of decreasing attachment and investment with the physical world. Producing a space consisting solely of images, this kind of cinematic display is understood as reducing our sensorial connection with the non-cinematic and more-than-visual spaces of our everyday lives. Such spaces, therefore, are both led by and lead wider changes in spatial perception.

If our knowledge of what exists in cinematic terms is predicated upon this notion of film-as-window, recording an objective reality of some sort (albeit a highly constructed one), then the ability of digital special effects to convincingly replicate reality without recourse to any profilmic events alters the accepted ontology of film.[7] These technologies are used to remove unanticipated or uncontrolled elements, working over and modifying what exists within the film frame. The management or calculated composition of images has been a fundamental condition of cinema since its inception: Eadweard Muybridge's photographic experiments worked explicitly to define and master bodily movement, while the 'actualities' of the Lumière brothers were carefully framed for maximum visual activity. Studio sets and the star system remain proven methods for removing contingency and the unexpected, generally focusing the attention of the viewer upon narrative rather than chance details. This is crucial to the shooting of Hollywood films, which are based not on the capture of 'spectacular, chance events', but upon the reproduction of a 'previsualized, script-based image'.[8] Greatly extending this logic, digital effects might be referred to as 'overdetermined' in their potential to remove *all* contingency and chance, even at the level of an actor's performance (which might be 'digitised' in ways explored below). In this way the body, which lies at the

[6] Cubitt, 2005, p. 250.
[7] On the extent of this alteration, see Stephen Prince, 'The Emergence of Filmic Artifacts: Cinema and Cinematography in the Digital Era', *Film Quarterly* 57.3 (Spring 2004), pp. 24–33.
[8] Eric S. Faden, 'Crowd Control: Early Cinema, Sound, and Digital Images', *Journal of Film and Video* 53.2/3 (Summer/Fall 2001), pp. 93–106 (p. 99).

heart of the action sequence for Tasker and Purse among others, changes its relationship to both its surrounding space and the viewer of the sequence.

If digital effects are closely bound up with the highly deliberative aspects of image construction in contemporary action cinema, increasing the capacity of filmmakers to control the image, then this control can be seen to extend a tradition of mapping and standardisation which Lefebvre has shown gives rise to abstract space, the logics of which currently manifest themselves in digitally created environments. In both *The Matrix* (1999) and *Swordfish* (2001) a technique referred to as 'bullet-time' uses analogue photographic referents in tandem with digital manipulation to arrest temporal flow at moments of action, investigating their spatial dynamics with a seemingly highly mobile camera. In the sequel to *The Matrix*, *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003), the use of 'virtual cinematography' further maps and spatialises the environments in which action takes place, and in doing so removes the profilmic human body from the film frame. While these totalised digital spaces strongly reflect the operations of abstract space in their removal of contingency and their emphasis upon visual mastery, the use of a visual presentation of cyberspace in *TRON: Legacy* (2010) indicates the possibility for contemporary digital special effects to provide an embodied account of this otherwise non-spatial domain by placing a human figure within it and depicting it as a site of joy and kinetic adventure. The action sequences of this film, set within an overtly cyberspatial world, show the tendency for the human body to remain a site of meaning and to operate as a provider of spatial information not reducible to the determinants of Lefebvre's abstract space. Before analysis of sequences from these films, a brief summary of how digital effects have been interpreted as spatial is required.

Digital Effects in Critical Theory

Describing the intersection of media technology and embodiment, Vivian Sobchack states that

> [e]ach [new] technology not only differently *mediates* our figurations of bodily existence but also *constitutes* them […]. Each differently and objectively alters our subjectivity while each invites our complicity in formulating space, time, and bodily investment as significant personal and social experience.[9]

[9] Sobchack, 2004, pp. 136–137, emphasis in original.

The technological mediation of space impacts upon the ways in which we conceive of, produce and interact with space and those within it. Experiencing space through technology means that space is constituted *by* technology. For Sobchack, contemporary media that is based on electronics diffuses the consciousness and body of the spectator, or user, across 'a materially flimsy latticework of nodal points'. This diffusion creates a 'metaworld' of representation in which phenomenological connection is lessened, and so too therefore is ethical responsibility.[10] Computer-generated imagery, as a representation of this phenomenon, can work to map 'the special semiotic power and aesthetic value that "depthlessness" now has for the visual consumer in postmodern culture', in this way providing an account of the otherwise invisible and ephemeral corporate global network that saturates contemporary space, detailing its perceptual and ethical consequences.[11] Digital effects demonstrate that we are all, in Sobchack's phrase, visual consumers, and they create spaces that support this position.

So too for many other writers digital effects are emblematic of cultural developments privileging depthlessness, lack of investment and a valorisation of pure, instantaneous sensation. Andrew Darley considers blockbuster cinema, 'laden with special effects' as it is, to be an 'emblem of the recent turn to image and form' in contemporary society.[12] This is a typical equation of digital effects imagery with spectacular display, the latter separate from and implicitly or explicitly opposed to narrative. Story progression, being temporal, is somehow halted by digital spectacle, which imposes a spatialised form of attention in its focus upon artifice and image. Cubitt phrases this perceived phenomenon in exactly these parameters: 'Like architecture and maps, and enshrined in the cartographic timelines of nonlinear editing and vector animation programs, the art of special effects is an art of space'.[13] For Cubitt, such effects are therefore another example of how in contemporary cinema '[s]patialization takes over from narrative the job of managing the film's dynamics'.[14] This echoes the spatialisation of cultural experience described at length by Fredric Jameson, who suggests that, having forgotten

[10] Sobchack, 2004, p. 154.
[11] Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*, 2nd edn (New Brunswick, New Jersey & London: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 272.
[12] Darley, 2000, p. 102.
[13] Cubitt, 2005, p. 249.
[14] Cubitt, 2005, p. 224.

how to think historically, we no longer have any sense of history and live instead in a perpetual (and therefore entirely spatial) present.[15]

Yet contemporary cinema still relies upon narrative, which leads some critics to see digital effects in film not as evidence of cultural spatialisation but as a site of tension between time and space. Michele Pierson, for instance, explores the conflict between the bracketed spectacular display that characterises digital effects and cinematic language which privileges narrative and story. For her, science-fiction films attempt to integrate these two styles. Their use of computer-generated imagery, though playing across the twin poles of 'photographic realism' and 'synthetic hyperrealism',[16] ultimately favours the latter, leading to 'a mode of spectatorial address that […] solicits a contemplative viewing of the computer-generated image'.[17] As a result, she argues that digital effects up to the late 1990s are an alternative mode of presentation bracketed from narrative, 'in which cinematographic space is disrupted by the insertion of a computer-generated object'.[18] The spatial 'disruption' caused by digital objects is further emphasised either through filmmaking strategies such as 'tableau-style framing, [and] longer takes', the perceptible 'electronic properties of the digital artefact' ('high crominance', 'intense luminosity'), or through the very scarcity of such effects within the body of the film, scarcity which highlights their marked difference with, rather than kinship to, the 'cinematographic space'.[19] By competing with the profilmic world and splitting attention in this way, such effects can create what Aylish Wood refers to as 'timespaces'. Wood suggests that the use of digital effects alters the way in which images are both presented by the filmmaker and received by an audience, the creation of digital elements vying with the classical system of character-identification and narrative involvement for the attention of the viewer. By splitting the attention of the viewer, the 'competing elements' created by digital effects force a more active involvement by offering a choice of attention-objects. This involvement, in Wood's framework, introduces 'spatio-temporal organizations' into a classical narrative cinema that was previously overtly temporal.[20] In this, she stresses that the 'dynamic spatial elements'

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[15] Jameson, 1991, p. ix.
[16] Pierson, 1999, p. 172.
[17] Pierson, 1999, p. 169. On the 'interruptions' performed by special effects see also Sean Cubitt, 'Le réel, c'est l'impossible: The Sublime Time of Special Effects', *Screen* 40.2 (Summer 1999), pp. 123–130; on the intersection between special effects and the sublime, see Bukatman, 2003, pp. 91–97.
[18] Pierson, 1999, p. 170.
[19] Pierson, 1999, pp. 169–170; see also Sobchack, 2001, pp. 260–261.
[20] Aylish Wood, *Digital Encounters* (London & New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 162.

created by digital special effects add new dimensions to narrative, making space more than a vehicle or a supporting character, as it instead becomes the focus of the image.[21] Timespaces are hypermediated instances of connection between viewer and film, and Wood sees them as spatial elements somehow different to the traditional, or indexical, cinematographic image. In the tension between these two image-forms she sees a possible connection between media and viewer.

This concept of hypermediacy is described by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin in their book *Remediated*, a text that has been of some inspiration in analyses of digital effects. Hypermediacy, for them, names the tendency in contemporary media to indicate both a transparent presentation of the real and also 'the opacity' (the existence and conditions) of the media itself.[22] Seeking audience immersion, media forms like cinema also call attention to this act of immersion and make a pleasurable spectacle out of it. In Pierson's dichotomy of 'realistic' and 'hyperreal electronic' aesthetics,[23] the latter can therefore be recognised as a hypermediated experience of electronic image production. Spectacle, 'begin[ning] and end[ing] with its own artifice […] is simultaneously both display and on display', as Darley phrases this phenomenon.[24] For Lisa Purse, echoing Wood, the 'difference' exhibited by digital effects has the capacity to provide a particular type of mediated experience, as the effects become, in her words, 'the focus of the spectator's pleasure and amazement'.[25] As shown, Sobchack suggests something similar, arguing that effects map the depthless tendencies of contemporary image-dominated cultural production through their own depthless and spatialised mode of display.

As digital effects have become more common, they are less marked out by the strategies and aesthetic differences highlighted by the writers above. Nonetheless, they remain bracketed from the profilmic elements within the cinematic image through their mode of production, even if film production itself is increasingly dependent upon digital technology, and this bracketing process is increasingly invisible to the viewer. The

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[21] Aylish Wood, 'Timespaces in Spectacular Cinema: Crossing the Great Divide of Spectacle Versus Narrative', *Screen* 43:4 (Winter 2002), pp. 370–386 (p. 375).
[22] Jay David Bolter & Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, 2000), p. 21.
[23] Pierson, 1999, p. 171.
[24] Darley, 2000, p. 104.
[25] Lisa Purse, 'The New Spatial Dynamics of the Bullet-Time Effect', in Geoff King (ed), *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to 'Reality' TV and Beyond* (Bristol & Portland: Intellect, 2005), pp. 151–160 (p. 154).

potential 'hyperplasticity' and 'postfilmic' nature of images including (or solely consisting of) digital special effects creates very different representations of space than those captured indexically.[26] Providing filmmakers the ability extend their control over depicted space and movement within it such effects can often carry the traces of their 'production in a space with no atmosphere, no respiration, no experience of depth or gravity'; that is, a non-human space.[27] In their computerised creation these environments evince a drive to produce a controllable, totally visualised environment. In this commodification of information through the production of entirely visual space, to what extent do digital effects echo and promulgate abstract spatial imaginations, and within such imaginations what room is there for the embodied experience of spatial appropriation that is offered by the action sequence form?

Swordfish and The Matrix Trilogy – Totalised Space

Jameson suggests that in the latter twentieth century cultural life became peculiarly spatialised, a result of 'our insertion as individual subjects into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities', an insertion arising from globalisation and the ascendency of commodity production and exchange.[28] He proposes Jacques Lacan's definition of schizophrenia as a 'suggestive aesthetic model' for postmodernism, containing as it does a 'breakdown of temporality' leading to an abundant and unstable present. Jameson explains that this breakdown

> suddenly releases this present of time from all the activities and intentionalities that might focus it and make it a space of praxis; thereby isolated, that present suddenly engulfs the subject with undescribable [*sic*] vividness, a materiality of perception properly overwhelming.[29]

Jameson's words can also claim to be a particularly apt description of the digitally-enabled special effect known as 'bullet-time'. Used in *The Matrix* and *Swordfish*, this effect works to spatialise experience and in this way indicates how digital mediation is closely tied to the production of space in contemporary life.

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[26] For discussion of this, see Fisher, 2009, pp. 176–177.
[27] Pierson, 1999, p. 168.
[28] Jameson, 1991, p. 413.
[29] Jameson, 1991, pp. 26–27.

While reliant on profilmic material, the bullet-time technique in many ways inaugurates a style of digital effects in which spaces are created whose connection to the real world (via the use of profilmic material) is minimal, and demonstrates the capacity of these effects to assist in mapping space, making of it a totally known, navigable environment. These tendencies are further taken up by another digital effect, that of virtual cinematography. Both of these techniques reflect cultural developments that privilege detached, quantified environments over lived, contingent ones. As does the architecture of the Bonaventure for Jameson, they represent space as 'total and absolute and yet also as decentered and disorienting'.[30] They point towards a culture which is more spatial than temporal, individual moments or events becoming reproducible and malleable: they can be slowed down, expanded and rotated for closer inspection, as they are in bullet-time. Space is constructed from (and *as*) a series of depthless images, a construction that marginalises or excludes the human form.

The bullet-time technique offers the spectator a 'present of time',[31] immersing them within the diegesis and providing a spectacular presentation of a single moment from an array of viewpoints. A few hundred cameras encircle the point of action, filming it at a rate of one thousand frames per second, taking 'a sequential series of pictures along the path of a notional camera', these images 'later digitally composited with traditional footage to "animate" the camera movement around the action'.[32] In *The Matrix* the effect is used to present acrobatic moments of extra-human agility that take place, due to the abilities of those performing them, faster than the human eye can comprehend. By greatly slowing the temporal action, and moving around it at speed, bullet-time displays the spectacle of the human body moving fast enough to dodge visible, comparatively slow-moving bullets. The effect, for Purse, makes spatial relations more expressive. It 'arrange[s] bodies spatially across various axes, […] generating more fluid articulations and conflations of the action body's gestures and postures of mastery'.[33] The power of the action protagonist in these moments is moreover constructed as both spatial and temporal, as their actions slow down time and allow them to dominate space. In the narrative of *The Matrix*, bullet-time is used to demonstrate the power of key characters to bend the rules of the titular computer simulation program: generally speaking, the

[30] Sobchack, 2001, p. 255, drawing on Jameson, 1991, pp. 38–44.
[31] Jameson, 1991, p. 27.
[32] Purse, 2011, p. 15.
[33] Purse, 2009, p. 225.

broader and longer-lasting the deployment of the technique, the greater the ability of the character centred within it. In the finale of the film, several bullet-time moments pivot around Neo, the action protagonist, when he comes up against threats which test the limits of his newfound powers, including facing down an armed assailant on a rooftop and launching into combat against the principal antagonist, Agent Smith. In these instances the technique illustrates the extension of Neo's capacity to control and manipulate the space of the Matrix, a realistic-looking cyber-environment in which mankind is enslaved. Purse, in particular, sees these sequences as 'richly communicative, mapping out shifting hierarchies of power as well as characters' attitudes to themselves, their bodies and to other characters', and in this way she suggests they provide expressive visualisations which can aid character understanding, identification and – crucially – embodiment.[34]

However, a clear equation of bullet-time with an emphasis upon the body and an embodied sensorial connection between viewer and film is problematic, as can be seen from the way the effect is used in *Swordfish*. In this film, a bomb detonation is filmed using bullet-time, the 'notional camera' moving in wide circle around a street intersection in which the explosion is wreaking carnage. The epicentre of the blast is – or was – two human figures, both of whom are instantly obliterated and replaced by the explosion itself as the bullet-time begins. Tracking around the blast, the shot focuses upon the collateral damage: cars being thrown, glass shattered and people killed and injured. The human body is in this sequence a piece of material at the mercy of physical forces, quite unlike the centrality of the body in the bullet-time of *The Matrix*. This is in accordance with what Scott Bukatman identifies as the human decentring of digital effects: when mediated by computer technologies in this way, experience of space is 'defined almost solely in terms of spatial penetration and kinetic achievement', and in this way these displays supplant 'character oriented subjectivity' with vehicular or autonomous movement.[35]

This decentring, when understood through the analyses of space and place that have been explored in earlier chapters, indicates the inadequacy of the human form within particular kinds of produced environments. As shown, the production of 'space' – in part a method of capital accumulation and exchange – requires the instalment of a

[34] Purse, 2009, p. 231.
[35] Bukatman, 2003, p. 27.

'unitary, logistical, operational and quantifying rationality'[36] that seems to create a world consisting of 'an expanse of highways, shopping malls and parking lots'[37] rather than places of memory and meaning that are centred on a sense of history and appeals to human experience. Thanks to the computer-generated image, it can be broadly suggested, 'film has been freed from its dependence on history and on the physical world'.[38] *The Matrix* may present the body as spectacle, but the very use of bullet-time in that film as well as in *Swordfish* constructs the space in which the body exists as totalised, connected and image-oriented, and in this way undermines the situated knowledge of place provided by personal, subjective spatial engagement. Immediate spatial experience becomes explicitly mediated (or hypermediated) through a technological presentation of space that equates spatial knowledge with seeing rather than acting, visual consumption rather than embodied improvisation. As Purse states, bullet-time allows 'mastery over the visual' by indicating to the viewer that they 'can see *everything*'.[39] This equation of digital visualisation with power is indicated in the conclusion to the film, in which Neo becomes completely attuned to the machine-made computer environment: his new consciousness is depicted optically, a point-of-view shot revealing that he now sees the Matrix for what it is – lines of computer code. Here space is shown to be explicitly coded and Neo's ability to read this code allows him to master his environment in newfound ways.

Bullet-time is an expression of this mastery, and therefore takes part in the 'drive for scopic mastery' that Bukatman considers 'technologically advanced optical displays [to] surely derive from'. Visual spectacle provides 'reassurance in the form of a panoptic power', a power of visual communicativeness which is comforting in presenting all things as perceptible by the human eye, albeit with technological aids.[40] Bullet-time presents a 'heightened spatial experience perceived as autonomous [and] *absolute*',[41] space and mapping privileged over time and narrative. Action spectacle reveals the potential of digital special effects to map an event and a location in this totalising manner using visual procedures, and so provides the illusion of a fully navigable space.

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[36] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 280.
[37] Thomas Brockelman, 'Getting Back Into No Place: On Casey, Deconstruction and the Architecture of Modernity', *Human Studies* 19.4 (Oct 1996), pp. 441–458 (p. 450).
[38] Barbara Creed, 'The Cyberstar: Digital Pleasures and the End of the Unconscious', *Screen* 41.1 (Spring 2000), pp. 79–86 (p. 80).
[39] Purse, 2005, pp. 158–159, emphasis in original.
[40] Bukatman, 2003, p. 81.
[41] Sobchack, 2001, p. 255, emphasis in original.

While writers such as Wood emphasise the positive possibilities of such visualisations, Jean-Pierre Geuens, for instance, understands such scopic technology to be essentially oppressive. Citing Martin Heidegger, Geuens states that 'to adopt the technological world view is to wish insatiably to master, control, and dominate whatever is set before us', technology used to frame and manipulate the world.[42] The plot of *The Matrix* indicates the ability of digital technology to convincingly deceive, as in the film nearly the entire human race is enslaved within a digitally generated paraspace which keeps them sedate while their bodies are farmed for energy by sentient machines in a post-apocalyptic future. While providing a sensation of mastery, technological imaging also parodoxically reduces human agency.

In the first sequel to *The Matrix*, *The Matrix Reloaded*, the use of digital technologies to depict and greatly extend Neo's own abilities further underlines equation of the mapping of space with the mastering of it, the use of virtual cinematography providing an even more comprehensive and controlled environment in which action sequences play out. More than this, these sequences subtract the profilmic body from this environment. As Purse describes, whereas in *The Matrix*

> the pro-filmic [*sic*] body was retained at the center of the spectacle, with digital effects used to create a notional camera trajectory around this moving pro-filmic subject, in key action sequences in *Reloaded* the pro-filmic body is erased altogether and replaced with a computer-generated virtual action body.[43]

This replacement means that while *The Matrix* presented a narrative focusing upon a 'crisis of mastery',[44] the sequel by contrast presents repeated assurances of mastery. These assurances are tied to the efficacy and programmability of the digital body within the digital space as depicted by virtual cinematography. The two most indicative sequences of this technique are a fight between the protagonist and an army of antagonists in an urban park, colloquially known in the press (but not within the narrative of the film) as the 'burly brawl', and a freeway car chase culminating in a martial arts fight atop a moving truck. In each sequence, profilmic referents are progressively removed and replaced by digital elements at moments of heightened

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[42] Jean-Pierre Geuens, 'The Digital World Picture', *Film Quarterly* 55.4 (Summer 2002), pp. 16–27 (p. 23). Geuens here follows Martin Heidegger, *The Question Regarding Technology and Other Essays*, William Lovitt (trans.) (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 129–134.

[43] Lisa Purse, 'Digital Heroes in Contemporary Hollywood: Exertion, Identification, and the Virtual Action Body', *Film Criticism* 32.1 (Fall 2007), pp. 5–25 (p. 18, emphasis in original).

[44] Purse, 2011, p. 13.

visual display, allowing not only Neo but also the filmmakers a greater degree of spatial control. This control appeals to Cartesian logics of homogenous, mathematical abstraction through the creation of space using computerised means.

In the burly brawl, Neo is confronted by his old enemy Agent Smith, a program in the Matrix who now has the ability to copy himself by taking over the bodies of others. Neo is able to fight against this assimilation when it is attempted on him, and this is the cue for the brawl, as dozens and then hundreds of Smiths try to overpower and assimilate Neo. The first stages of the fight are filmed on a soundstage with actors and stunt doubles, digital effects used to erase the wires which make possible the gravity-defying kung fu choreography and also to replace the faces of additional fighters with that of actor Hugo Weaving, who plays Smith and his many iterations (although the faces of some extras remain unaltered in the background). Then, beginning around halfway through the fight, completely digital images are used for shots one or two seconds long. Towards the conclusion of the sequence, once Neo begins using a metal pole as a weapon, these entirely digital, virtually cinematographed shots predominate. The implied freedom of the notional camera of virtual cinematography is asserted as shots swoop around, through and above the combat for many seconds without cutting.[45]

Virtual cinematography operates in the same manner as bullet-time, 'prob[ing] into the three-dimensionality of the diegesis,' the notional camera 'detached, able to plot its own path through the filmic space', but is qualitatively different.[46] Bullet-time, as indicated above, utilises an array of analogue photographic images of a profilmic referent that are transitioned between using digital morphing and populated with some additional digital, or digitally manipulated elements. By contrast, 'the virtually cinematographed image does not engage with the physical world in the way that the filmed image does', but rather creates an alternative, virtual reality of digitised images, this virtual reality a significant modification of previous digital effects which 'work[ed] over' images that contained an indexical link to a physical, profilmic referent.[47] Virtual cinematography captures visual data using photography or digital video recording, then digitises or

[45] On the use of virtual cinematography in this sequence, see Dan North, 'Virtual Actors, Spectacle and Special Effects: King Fu Meets "All That CGI Bullshit"', in Stacy Gillis (ed), *The Matrix Trilogy: Cyberpunk Reloaded* (London & New York: Wallflower, 2005), pp. 48–61.
[46] Purse, 2005, p. 157.
[47] Jenna Ng, 'Virtual Cinematography and the Digital Real: (Dis)placing the Moving Image Between Reality and Simulacra', in Damian Sutton, Susan Brind & Ray McKenzie (eds), *The State of the Real: Aesthetics in the Digital Age* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2007), pp. 172–180 (p. 179).

virtualises this, the visual information 'triangulated with algorithms to interpolate any position not captured in the original stills'.[48]

This creates a full, navigable digital space, one which marginalises the profilmic human body, since the spaces of virtual cinematography are more conveniently populated by a digital body that is as programmable as the space in which it is situated. Rather than filming an actor in front of a greenscreen and inserting them into the environment, virtual cinematography computerises performances using a process known as motion capture, or 'mo-cap'. This involves actors performing on an empty set surrounded by cameras while wearing a skin-tight suit fitted with markers. These markers 'establish a series of vertices in three-dimensional space, and the cameras capture only this vertex data'.[49] This information is 'applied to a virtual 3-D body, which is then instantly mapped onto a kind of digital puppet', and in this way 'mo-cap removes the physical reality of the body and replaces it with something or someone digital'.[50] Furthermore, an actor's face will often be filmed with several dozen small cameras as it contorts into a variety of expressions, this data then used to composite a programmable face which can be applied to the digital stunt double created by mo-cap. The body is in this way reduced to a series of mapped points that are collected and subsequently manipulated through digital means.

Sobchack considers such electronic or digitally created spaces to defy 'traditional geographical description',[51] but in their creation and plotting using Euclidean cartographic methods they might be better understood as spaces of nothing but geographical description. They remove the organic just as they remove contingency. The setting for the burly brawl works in this way prior to its rendering using virtual cinematography, the space itself made controllable and mappable in order to smooth the later transition to a digital image. Though it is presented as an exterior space, the sound stage on which it is filmed is interior, thus providing control of weather and light. This light is static and generally diffuse and the space is visually self-contained with no horizon point. Despite the fact that it appears to be a park or recreational area, it holds

[48] Ng, 2007, p. 178.
[49] Stephen Prince, *Digital Visual Effects in Cinema: The Seduction of Reality* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2012), p. 120.
[50] Scott Balcerzak, 'Andy Serkis as Actor, Body and Gorilla: Motion Capture and the Presence of Performance', in Balcerzak & Sperb (eds.), *Cinephilia in the Age of Digital Reproduction*, pp. 195–213 (p. 196).
[51] Sobchack, 2001, p. 233.

no living trees or plant life. In addition, the simple costumes and formal gestural styles of the performers in the scene further lessen the perception of change once they are replaced by digital stunt doubles. The requirements of digital mediation also, therefore, impact upon those elements of the scene not captured by virtual cinematography.

This technique presumes and announces that space can be entirely known, quantified, and reproduced in an instrumental manner. In this it resembles Lefebvre's abstract space, something not only defined by the eradication of nature and 'the disappearance of trees',[52] but also the drive towards total comprehension and quantification.[53] Knowledge of nature, expressed in homogenous measurements, is a vital part of the production of abstract space, a space generated by standardisation and maintained through 'continuous, rational economic calculation in the spheres of production and exchange, as well as comprehensive, encompassing control in the realm of statecraft'.[54] A 'simulacrum of a full space', in abstract space contingency and chance have been marginalised or removed completely.[55] Virtual cinematography echoes these conditions of information collection, de-emphasised materiality and quantifiable homogeneity, absorbing 'the entirety of space for its own purposes' (as Lefebvre considers capitalism to do).[56]

In describing this kind of technocratic and functional space par excellence, virtual cinematography is also required to replace the organic human body with a surrogate. In this it again mimics Lefebvre's abstract space, in which the body is 'disdained, absorbed, and broken into pieces by images'.[57] Crucially, for Lefebvre, bodies and spaces can only be properly examined when both are taken into account:

> The living organism has neither meaning nor existence when considered in isolation from its extensions, from the space that it reaches and produces (i.e. its "milieu" – to use a fashionable term that tends to reduce activity to the level of mere passive insertion into a natural material realm). Every such organism is

[52] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 50.
[53] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 334.
[54] Neil Brenner & Stuart Elden, 'Henri Lefebvre on State, Space, Territory', *International Political Sociology* 3.4 (Dec 2009b), pp. 353–377 (p. 358).
[55] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 313.
[56] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 95. For Bukatman, these operations can be linked to utopian imaginations, with their focus upon movement-through-mapping: 'The omniscient and revelatory moving camera of SF [*sic*] film is a function of utopian discursive practice: a gaze from which nothing is hidden but that is not "included" within the fixed space itself' (Bukatman, 2003, p. 124).
[57] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 201.

> reflected and refracted in the changes that it wreaks in its "milieu" or "environment" – in other words, *in its space*.[58]

The fragmentation that occurs as both a predicate and a consequence of abstraction has therefore led to a betrayal, denial and abandonment of the body in Western discourse. As a result, knowledge and power are allied under strategies of abstraction and control, while a practical, lived experience of space is devalued as a site of authority.[59]

Lefebvre understands the body to be quantified and fragmented through visual methods, a process begun by Taylorism, 'one of the first "scientific" approaches to productivity, [which] reduced the body as a whole to a small number of motions subjected to strictly controlled linear determinations'.[60] This finds a clear contemporary expression in the way contemporary digital effects collect data regarding body shape and movement using mo-cap sessions, the body used as a vehicle to collect spatial data points which are then programmed to construct a digital body which is more spectacular and minutely controllable than the profilmic body being replaced. For Geuens, this makes the body of the action protagonist into a manipulable resource:

> the integrity, grace, and dimensionality of a human body responding to the surrounding living environment is systematically leveled as its body parts are forced to perform independently of one another just like any other raw material that is mined and apportioned with cold and calculated efficiency.[61]

This body is fragmented and reassembled in a controllable form, much like the space in which it is situated; it becomes digitised in order to suit the 'milieu' of virtual cinematography.[62] The space of state control, being for Lefebvre 'optical and visual', is not a space in which the body can survive, as it disappears 'into a space that is equivalent to a series of images [...]. In modern space, the body no longer has a presence; it is only *represented*, in a spatial environment reduced to its optical components'.[63]

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[58] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 196, emphasis in original.
[59] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 407.
[60] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 204.
[61] Geuens, 2002, p. 23.
[62] On the consequences of this technique see 'Synthespians Among Us', in which digital character creation is noted as being something of a removal of humanity, resulting in the absence of 'the dialectical play of the actor/character binary', meaning actors providing the raw, Cartesian data for synthespians are denied a crucial, enfranchising element of their labour normally found in the visible evidence of their profilmic performance onscreen. Jonathan Burston, 'Synthespians Among Us: Rethinking the Actor in Media Work and Media Theory', in James Curran & David Morley (eds), *Media and Cultural Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 250–262 (p. 258).
[63] Henri Lefebvre, 'Space and the State', Alexander Kowalski, Neil Brenner, Aaron Passell, Bob Jessop,

These strategies impact upon the viewer's experience of the action sequence. As Purse asks, 'does the way in which the action film shows us the action body and its trials and successes change when that body is fully digitised, digitally enhanced or digitally composited with other image elements?'.[64] Action sequences provide 'an aspirational, empowering vision of the human body functioning at the extremes of what is physically possible', generating this through an embodied response grounded in the action protagonist's physical movement.[65] Therefore, in films using digital effects and particularly digital bodies, the 'sensorial connection with the striving body of the action hero is in danger of dissipating, with a concomitant negative impact on the spectator's engagement with the hero's narrative of becoming'.[66] While some writers consider virtual cinematography to provide a liberating, ungrounded experience in line with Neo's character development,[67] this should not be considered the case given the questionable realism of the digital body. For Purse, in the burly brawl, 'Neo's digitally animated form appears rubbery in surface texture and more elastic than a real-world film body', while the use of slow-motion 'merely draws attention to a digital body that is not quite convincing in perceptual terms'.[68] These qualities divest the sequence of a sense of organic reality. This absence is further accentuated by the violent actions being unaccompanied by blood, bruises, or visible physical anguish.

This underscores the plastic malleability of both the bodies and the spaces in which they are situated. Similar properties and consequences can be identified in the freeway chase scene later in the film, which is again set in a location divested of all organicism and which uses virtual cinematography at a key moment of spectacle. Several miles of freeway were constructed by the filmmakers to stage the sequence, in which a number of agents attempt to capture Neo's compatriots using a variety of vehicles. Again, context is minimised in the production design, here by large walls either side of the lanes of traffic. The sequence is built around an increasing mobility of space and surface, moving vehicles, moving bodies and moving backgrounds all, for Andrew

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Stuart Elden & Gerald Moore (trans.), in Brenner & Elden (eds), *State, Space, World* (2009d), pp. 223–253 (p. 234, emphasis in original).

[64] Purse, 2009, p. 214.

[65] Purse, 2009, p. 214.

[66] Purse, 2009, p. 222.

[67] See, for example, Anne Cranny-Francis, 'Moving *The Matrix*: Kinesic Excess and Post-Industrial Being', in Gillis (ed), *The Matrix Trilogy*, pp. 101–113 (pp. 105–106).

[68] Purse, 2007, pp. 18–19.

Shail, releasing the body and the viewer from a grounded experience of space.[69] This ungrounding or decentring climaxes at the conclusion to the sequence, in which two trucks hit each other and begin to explode and Neo – his only contribution to the combat – flies through the image to rescue two other characters, all depicted in a single virtually cinematographed shot. As in *The Matrix*, action motivates the comprehensive mapping of space, and the spatialisation of time in the form of slowed down events and a rapidly moving notional camera. To fully achieve this, *The Matrix Reloaded* substitutes the profilmic human body for a programmed digital body better suited to the mode of spatial presentation. Following Lefebvre's words on abstract space, this approach indicates how spectacular action can take part in a visual and visualising regime of organic subtraction for the sake of comprehensive spatial mapping. Yet, as Lefebvre repeatedly makes clear in his work, compartmentalisation of life or space does not aid understanding of it: 'fragments do not constitute knowledge'.[70] Virtual cinematography presents a spectacle of spatial appropriation which, through its reliance upon both digitally created spaces and bodies, can work to lessen these sensations of appropriation.

TRON: Legacy – Embodied Cyberspace

This chapter has so far shown that algorithmic, mathematical determinism of spaces created using digital techniques like virtual cinematography employ the same logics as abstract space as defined by Lefebvre. It has further been demonstrated that the population of this space by digital bodies in the form of digital stunt doubles and digital characters stresses how such logics work to remove the organic and the contingent from the spaces created. This is necessary, since as Lefebvre suggests activity in space is restricted by that space: 'space "decides" what activity may occur' by being geared towards certain activities and not others.[71] Programmed, fully mapped space requires programmable, fully mapped bodies.

The ability and tendency of digital technology to map and totalise both spaces and bodies is prevalent throughout social life, the use of special effects in the action

[69] Andrew Shail, '"You Hear About Them All The Time": A Genealogy of the Sentient Program', in Gillis (ed), *The Matrix Trilogy*, pp. 23–35 (p. 33).
[70] Lefebvre, 2003, p. 49.
[71] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 143.

sequences of popular cinema being just one expression of this. For Michel de Certeau, technocratic systems, of which digital mapping surely forms a part, force the individual subject to undermine and 'outwit' such systems whenever they are able.[72] Though performed unconsciously, these tactics are the individual's way of dealing with the overarching grid of strategies and abstract systems that constrain their daily lives, the most overt and inescapable of which is capitalism. Tactics are ways of appropriating the spatial ordering of daily life, creating 'shadows and ambiguities' within spatial organisations: finding one's own route through the grid of an urban environment functions as an assertion, however minor, of personal expression in an otherwise prescribed space.[73]

Both abstract space and virtual cinematography seek to minimise these ambiguities. Digital images, in the words of Barbara Creed, 'create a clean plastic cinema based on organizational modes of creativity rather than on a play of improvization [*sic*] and intuition'.[74] How, then, can action sequences that use digital effects and digital spaces still depict the improvisational spatial appropriations that this thesis understands to be crucial to the form? In *The Matrix Reloaded*, the action protagonist's fleeting mastery of space *is* the depiction of space through digital means, both the aesthetic and narrative modes of the Matrix franchise negotiating this intersection of humanity and computerised, deterministic mastery. Lefebvre suggests in his *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume II* that the frameworks that define and delimit spatial use never entirely remove improvisational human bodily action:

> The social and the cultural never reabsorb the biophysiological, the unmediated or the natural. The sector which is rationally controlled by praxis never eliminates the uncontrolled sector, the sector of spontaneity and passion.[75]

Indeed, the Achilles heel of capital for Lefebvre is the 'ultimate inability to reduce "the body," "the practico-sensory realm" to abstract space'.[76] Digital spaces and bodies may aim at this reduction but, as an analysis of *TRON: Legacy* will show, the depiction of bodily activity within cyberspaces can provide an embodied experience of the otherwise

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[72] De Certeau, 1988, p. xxiv.
[73] De Certeau, 1988, p. 101.
[74] Creed, 2000, p. 85.
[75] Lefebvre, 2002, p. 141.
[76] Stefan Kipfer, 'How Lefebvre Urbanized Gramsci: Hegemony, Everyday Life, and Difference', in Kanishka Goonewardena, Stefan Kipfer, Richard Milgrom & Christian Schmid (eds), *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 193–211 (p. 203).

abstract space of digital imaging and communication technology, as the body is inserted into a world of Cartesian grids and digital exactness, orients itself within this environment and engages in kinetic play.

A 2010 sequel to *TRON*, itself one of the first films to use digital effects, *TRON: Legacy* is set twenty-five years later and depicts a character – Sam Flynn – corporeally entering a self-contained cyber environment. There, he reunites with his real father – Kevin Flynn – and defends himself from a false father, a digital duplication of Kevin named Clu. Kevin has aged while being trapped in the computer world for many years, but his double Clu remains youthful, an effect achieved through digitally altering actor Jeff Bridge's face to appear younger and mapping these expressions onto another body (that of younger actor John Reardon). While fending off Clu in an effort to escape 'the grid', as this cyber environment is called, Sam also learns of the 'ISOs', a sentient race of individualised consciousnesses born (not pre-programmed) within this environment, and now all but extinct. The film uses these ISOs and other narrative elements to discuss both the positive possibilities of technology and its potentially dangerous side effects.

The grid is often presented as literally that, latitudes and longitudes of fluorescent light etched upon sleek black surfaces. Grids, as Tim Cresswell points out, are endemic of an epistemology of rationalisation and control; they separate an object from the context in which it might normally be found and subject it to positivistic analysis. The space they create may imply neutrality but it can also be understood as yet 'one more technique in the state's arsenal of surveillance and regulation'.[77] This accords with Lefebvre's thoughts on Cartesianism and the foundational role it plays in urban space, a 'space of blank sheets of paper, drawing-boards, plans, sections, elevations, scale models, geometrical projections, and the like'.[78] Lefebvre asserts that the technicism and rationalism of this space is only to be overcome through a restitution of 'the practico-physical realm', achieved by 'struggling against the *ex post facto* projections of an accomplished intellect, against the reductionism to which knowledge is prone.' This is an 'uprising of the body, in short, against the signs of the non-body'.[79] In the same way, the arranged technocracy of the grid can be perceived as synonymous with de Certeau's

[77] Cresswell, 2006, p. 63.
[78] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 200.
[79] Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 200–201, emphasis in original.

urban framework, a lattice of spatial constraints ruled from above.[80] In this framework, it is within and upon the moving and improvising individual – de Certeau's pedestrian – that the possibility for human agency, and indeed humanity itself, is demonstrated. The body, broken into pieces and removed as a profilmic element from the action sequences in *The Matrix Reloaded*, is for the most part retained in *TRON: Legacy*, and gains an embodied, tactical knowledge of the spaces within which it moves, even the incorporeal and non-literal spaces of digital interaction.

The plots of both the Matrix and TRON franchises involve the insertion of an individual into a digitally created visual-material environment. This is not precisely how telephonic and computerised communications systems are experienced by individuals in their everyday lives. The rising use of media and mediating technologies devalues physical presence by making it unnecessary; as Joshua Meyrowitz states, 'the physical structures that once divided our society into many distinct *spatial* settings for interaction have been greatly reduced in social significance'.[81] As a result, the 'situational geography' of social life is displaced through processes of image proliferation and networked communication.[82] Bukatman suggests these changes lead to a reduction of tactile experience: 'less information comes to the subject via direct sensory, bodily experience and more, far more, arrives in mediated, representational forms'.[83] Sobchack further adds that 'however much its very inventions and use emerge from lived-body subjects, the electronic tends to marginalize or trivialize the human body'.[84]

In the cybernetic global network, '[c]oncrete presence is fading in the face of the telepresence offered by information superhighways, real-time video transmissions and planetary networks of perpetual communication'.[85] The arising space – with its

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[80] De Certeau, 1988, pp. 93–95.

[81] Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behaviour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. vii, emphasis in original.

[82] Meyrowitz, 1985, p. 6. Writing in the early 1980s, Lefebvre, citing the essentialism of communication to social life, asks: 'Will computer science, with its repercussions and related disciplines, go so far as to transform everyday life? To transform the social relations of production, reproduction and domination?' Many would suggest that it certainly has. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume III: From Modernity to Modernism (Towards a Metaphilosophy of Daily Life)*, Gregory Elliott (trans.) (London & New York: Verso, 2005), p. 136.

[83] Bukatman, 2003, p. 83.

[84] Sobchack, 2004, p. 161.

[85] Luke & Ó Tuathail, 2000, p. 377. On this change, see also Paul Virilio, *Open Sky* (London: Verso, 1997). Virilio's text is questioned by Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift for its rhetoric of marginalised humanism and lack of appreciation of the 'slow adjustment in practices' that accompanies these processes of 'speed-up'. Crang and Thrift take it to be emblematic of a kind of discourse which does not

emphasis on ephemerality and mediated communication – fails to fully engage subjects within it, who are then unable to connect to it in a bodily or mental way.[86] Films like *Jumper*, analysed earlier in this thesis, are symptomatic of this. Perhaps as a response to the potentially estranged and estranging experience of interpersonal encounters in contemporary mediated and teleconnected culture, and in a clear attempt to overcome this estrangement, films like *TRON: Legacy*, as well as the Matrix franchise, *Virtuosity* (1995), *eXistenZ* (1999) and *The Thirteenth Floor* (1999), interpret cyberspace spatially and imagine it as a geographical place of experience and interaction.[87] These representations of cyberspace provide a visualisation of the digital processes of the twenty-first century, granting humans 'interactive space within the real, but nonphysical, realms of the world's information banks',[88] achieving this by making it into a navigable, three-dimensional environment. Mark Nunes, citing Lefebvre, stresses that space 'is not a thing' but rather 'a social process', suggesting consequently that 'cyberspace is not where we go with network technology, but how we live it. And indeed,' he adds, 'we are already living it'.[89] Cyberspace is 'an articulation of a networked space that is enacted in material form, conceptual structure, and lived practice throughout everyday life in a network society'.[90]

Spatialisations therefore operate on an allegorical level, articulating a lived experience of a space that is not, in many ways, a real space. They make these qualities of cyberspace literally navigable, applying spatial structure 'where no inherent or obvious one exists in order to provide a means of visualising and comprehending space'.[91] For Richard Swope, cyberspace 'has come to play a significant, if not the leading, role in how we imagine and produce space at the onset of the twenty-first century', and he suggests that imaginations of cyberspace are directly tied to Cartesian and colonial understandings of mappable and controllable space installed in European culture during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Cyberspace, for him, offers 'an

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'report[…] back from reality' but instead actively produces new senses of space in a reflective process. 'Introduction', in Mike Crang & Nigel Thrift (eds), *Thinking Space* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1–30 (pp. 17–18). On this last – Virilio as trans-historical thinker rather than empiricist – see also Luke & Ó Tuathail, 2000, p. 363.

[86] Ian Buchanan details this phenomenon in 'Space in the Age of Non-Place' (Buchanan, 2005).

[87] These spatialisations are likely influenced by William Gibson's similarly themed novel *Neuromancer* (New York: Ace, 1984).

[88] Bukatman, 1992, p. 205.

[89] Mark Nunes, *Cyberspaces of Everyday Life* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. xxiii.

[90] Nunes, 2006, p. 19.

[91] Martin Dodge & Rob Kitchin, *Mapping Cyberspace* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 69.

extension of the Enlightenment or modernist dream […] of a world that [can] be both known (solved) and controlled'.[92] Using Lefebvre, Jameson and Harvey to indicate how cyberspace functions as 'a metonymic vision of the larger cultural logic of late capitalism', Swope suggests that part of this metonymy is the focus on image consumption: cyberspace is 'all image, a purely abstract representation of space', but in films it often manages to pass itself off 'as a material reality'. Social reality is in this way revealed to be 'comprised entirely of images', a surface lacking depth, leaving the subject living there 'unable to map his [*sic*] present position within either history or space'.[93]

Cyberspace, then, can function both as an allegory of digitised information exchange and storage as well as an allegory of a kind of postmodern spatial experience, being potentially mystifying, hiding as it does real conditions behind copious veils of images in a similar manner to capitalism.[94] The Matrix certainly aims to pass itself off as a material reality in that franchise, even though it is comprised entirely of images, and while moments of bullet-time may penetrate this space they do not reveal its illusory nature. Virtual cinematography as it is used in *The Matrix Reloaded* further demonstrates the capacity for digital technology to mystify through the illusion of a fully mapped and imaged space. By contrast, *TRON: Legacy*'s presentation of cyberspace explicitly operates as an illusion, the grid itself being a literalisation of Euclidean cartography. However, unlike the original *TRON*, in which the grid seemed to be 'a space with no atmosphere, no respiration, no experience of depth or gravity',[95] this space has explicitly evolved and is now imbued with atmospherics and a corporeality of substance that underscores its presence as a material, if still allegorical space. This materiality is combined in the action sequences of *TRON: Legacy* with an emphasis upon the body and its physical challenge and corporeality, tendencies that construct these sequences as moments in which cyberspace is appropriated for the purposes of personally meaningful agency, abstract space becoming lived (and livable) space.

Two such sequences occur around a third of the way into the film: Sam, having been transported to the grid, is quickly taken to a massive arena in which he is forced to fight

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[92] Richard Swope, 'Science Fiction Cinema and the Crime of Socio-Spatial Reality', *Science Fiction Studies* 29.2 (July 2002), pp. 221–246 (pp. 232–233).
[93] Swope, 2002, pp. 235–236.
[94] On such veils, see Soja, 1989, p. 50.
[95] Pierson, 1999, p. 168.

with programs in a shifting matrix of transparent cells known as ‘disc wars’. Surviving this, and after a brief conversation with Clu, Sam fights him and members of his army using ‘light cycles’ in another arena. Though attempting to team up with other competitors, he is nearly killed and is only saved by the arrival of Quorra, a character later revealed to be an ISO and an ally of Sam’s father Kevin. Throughout these two sequences, Sam is often confused by his surroundings, not knowing the precise workings of his ‘disc’ (a weapon and identity marker, shaped like a Frisbee) and sometimes fumbling his use of it, or being unaware of how other weapons and spaces operate. However, he is often able to learn the qualities of a space quickly, saving himself from imminent attack.

Like many of the scenes on the grid, this sequence uses extensive digital sets, occasional digital stunt doubles, and moments of virtual cinematography, as when Sam hangs from beneath a cell in the combat arena and the camera tracks quickly beneath him. These latter are brief, and work to ground the sequence in Sam’s physically recognisable actions, actions that generally do not extend beyond what might be humanly possible in the real world. A digital body is used particularly to depict the abilities of a combatant named Rinzler, himself a digital program, and this often only marginally extends capabilities associated with a human body. In a similar way, the use of virtual cinematography matches the shot construction and editing of the rest of the film, each shot for the most part depicting a single unit of action, such as Sam hanging beneath his cell, which evokes the tracking pan of a helicopter shot. These tendencies are stylistically very different to the sustained use of both digital bodies and virtual cinematography in *The Matrix Reloaded*, the latter including shots that extend for twenty or thirty seconds and involve the re-plotting of camera trajectory numerous times, this speed and movement frequently exceeding the physical capacity of any real camera.

The action sequences in *TRON: Legacy*, like the rest of the events on the grid, emphasise the materiality of the space not only through the extensive use of profilmic sets, props and extras, but by ensuring the use of digital effects and the creation of digital space is achieved with a high degree of what Stephen Prince refers to as ‘perceptual realism’. The use of ‘realistic lighting (shadows, highlights, reflections) and surface texture detail’ provide the illusion of ‘indexicalized referentiality’ to the extent

that the viewer perceives these elements as realistic, even though they are fantastical.[96] This materiality is further underscored by the blood shed by Sam during his fights, revealing him to be a 'user' – that is, human – rather than a program.[97] Unlike Neo, Sam's abilities are those of a capable human body, not those of a superhero or messiah, and the filmmaking reflects this. These grounding procedures allow the viewer to identify 'sensorially with each successive move, leap and impact, and with the hero's physical and emotional trajectory', identification that Purse sees as vital for action sequences.[98] These stylistic choices 'work to focus attention on and to foreground the work of the body, keeping it constantly in view'.[99]

This retention of profilmic elements in *TRON: Legacy* works to provide what Scott Bukatman has called in another context a 'tactics of inhabitation'.[100] The use, particularly in the action sequences, of photorealistic verisimilitude rather than stylistic inflation and bodily mutability, encourages sensorial connection with the action protagonist.[101] This, in turn, impacts upon the perception of the space in which this protagonist is moving. Speaking about a music video, Bukatman understands the use of dance, rhythm and even digital effects within the spaces of late capitalist infrastructure to be ways of possessing these environments, which he sees as normally 'uninhabited and uninhabitable'. The 'anxious status of the body under the terms of a disembodied globalism' is assuaged by rewriting space as a site of kinetic exuberance and play, the camera 'play[ing] a strong part in undermining the instrumental rationality of corporate space'.[102] Engaging with such spaces in an overtly and physically-grounded bodily way offers a phenomenological tactics of 'embodied, kinetic incursion', which for Bukatman has the potential to remap the subject 'onto the spaces of industrial and electronic capitalism'.[103]

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[96] Stephen Prince, 'True Lies: Perceptual Realism, Digital Images, and Film Theory', *Film Quarterly* 49.3 (Spring 1996), pp. 27–37 (p. 29).
[97] The costumes in the film, consisting of black fabric, plastics and strong light sources, were created at great expense for the film, rather than created digitally in post-production, as was the case with – for instance – the costume of the hero in *The Green Lantern* (2011).
[98] Purse, 2009, p. 218.
[99] Purse, 2011, p. 38. This is in contrast to Purse's consideration of the excessive use of digital stunt doubles and virtual cinematography in *The Matrix Reloaded*, techniques which draw attention away from the work of the body that underpins such sequences (Purse, 2009, p. 230).
[100] Bukatman, 2003, p. 2.
[101] Purse, 2009, p. 218.
[102] Bukatman, 2003, p. 2.
[103] Bukatman, 2003, p. 3.

The narrative and action sequences of *TRON: Legacy* stage confrontations between human or contingent elements and the computerised villain, the latter viewing the former as dangerous imperfections. For director Joseph Kosinki the TRON franchise is primarily about how in the pursuit of perfection through technology we can lose what make us human, and the perceptibly unreal features of Clu indicate the impossibility for digital effects to fully mimic, or embody, the human form.[104] 'I created the perfect system' Clu states towards the end of the film, angered that these parameters were not enough to please his human creator, Kevin. 'The thing about perfection,' Kevin replies, 'is that it's unknowable.' This exchange encapsulates the motivating dynamic at the core of both the film's narrative as well as its aesthetic qualities. Technology may be able to create perfect spaces, but does so at the cost of the human body and emotion: life cannot be reduced to ones and zeros.

Making cyberspace spatially material, and staging action within it, *TRON: Legacy* places the human 'organism' – which as shown for Lefebvre has 'neither meaning nor existence when considered in isolation from its extensions, from the space that it reaches and produces' – within a digital 'milieu' and grants it the power to react to and re-fashion what would otherwise be alienating and incomprehensible space.[105] Part of social life is now enacted in cyberspace, this representation mirroring this fact in an overtly spatial form. Early scenes in the film show Sam hacking computer systems using monitors and keyboards, his keystrokes influencing information flows shown on screens in other rooms. These generally disembodied actions are replaced within cyberspace by embodied ones that utilise Sam's demonstrated physical skill and willingness to take bodily risk. As indicated throughout this thesis, the action genre is predicated upon spatial engagement, knowledge and subversion; Richard Dyer indicatively states that action films 'offer us thrills and elations we might seldom have, might think it impossible really to have', but relate these to human co-ordinates and spatial experience.[106] Being set in a self-conscious and overt representation of cyberspace, *TRON: Legacy* grounds experience of computerised information networks, normally incorporeal, in the spatial human co-ordinates of the viewer's body through its action sequences, which emphasise bodily movement and sensorial impacts (instead of

[104] Roth Cornet, ''TRON: Legacy' Interview With Director Joseph Kosinski', *Screen Rant*, 17 December 10 <http://screenrant.com/tron-legacy-director-joseph-kosinski-interview-rothc-92394/all/1/> [accessed 28 March 2012].
[105] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 196.
[106] Dyer, 2000, p. 18.

the plastic malleability indicated by the use of virtual cinematography in *The Matrix Reloaded*).

Bukatman, keen to stress the utopian potential of the embodied representations of which *TRON: Legacy* is an example, states that even though we are 'bombarded, stunned into submission' by special effects, 'technological space mov[ing] through our passive bodies', we nonetheless 'move with it and sometimes even against its overdeterminism'.[107] Depictions of cyberspatial environments through digital means furthermore provide mappings of 'the deflated existential space produced by […] multinational capitalism',[108] bringing 'postmodern logic to visibility'.[109] In this postmodern world, the processes of time-space compression and ephemeral image production and consumption have led to a crucial disjuncture, 'the representation of space [...coming] to be felt as incompatible with the representation of the body'.[110] In the action sequences of *TRON: Legacy* this disconnection is addressed and the bewildering hyperspace that is cyberspace is reconceived as a place of embodied play. Sam's adventures on the grid, which are accompanied by giddy expressions of joy and amazement, speak to Bukatman's suggestion that presentations of kinetic activity within late capitalist environments express the possibility of non-prescribed movement, the potential for finding 'an unbounded landscape of pleasure' beneath 'the gridworks of urban life'. As he asserts, instrumentalism can be 'undermined by an antiproductive, antiteleological, kaleidoscopic passage'.[111] Sam outwits reigning powers and spatial arrangements by forcefully exiting the combat cell he is placed in, and by working together with other combatants on the light cycle grid to challenge the agents of the state, creating his own path and experience of this space which the viewer is invited to share in bodily terms. Moreover, the treatment of his corporeal body within this space as non-mutable and physically recognisable manifests a non-deterministic appropriation of an otherwise disembodied and alienating space that is representative of the workings of abstract space and top-down strategic control and spatial production.

[107] Bukatman, 2003, p. 129.
[108] Sobchack, 2001, p. 258.
[109] Sobchack, 2001, p. 244.
[110] Jameson, 1991, p. 34.
[111] Bukatman, 2003, p. 129.

Chapter Conclusion

The use of the digitally modified spectacle termed bullet-time in *The Matrix* and *Swordfish* demonstrates the ability of the digital image to provide full mappings of space, and whether the body is literally centred in this technique or not, human tactile subjectivity is eschewed in favour of a notional camera prescribing a carefully calculated environment. This technique constitutes space as entirely knowable. Virtual cinematography further affirms space as a site of recordable information, removing profilmic referents, including human bodies, and replacing them with digital composites of these referents in order to allow the represented space to be entirely navigable, its occupants controllable. The use of mo-cap and digital stunt doubles within virtual cinematography valorises an aesthetic of visual control that can, as in Purse's account, lessen phenomenological investment. While Bukatman may evoke de Certeau in his understanding that the 'interplay of controlled space and the evocation of weightless escape' in such fictions provides a viewer with an embodied understanding of contemporary technologies and the spaces they create,[112] the elimination by such technologies of the potential for 'shadows and ambiguities' – in their standardisation of all spaces and bodies as an endless series of data points – undermines the tactical knowledge that de Certeau sees as a vital and inevitable aspect of successful social life.[113] Rather than operate in the manner of Wood's timespaces, or express the tension Pierson sees in early 1990s digital effects, virtual cinematography fully integrates the human with the technological, presenting their co-existence as hypermediated spectacle. The actions of Neo in *The Matrix Reloaded* continue to rely upon improvisation and environmental adaptation, but the tone of these is quite different when performed by a digital stunt double within an overtly contingency-free environment.

Science fiction, according to Bukatman, is 'a notoriously rationalist genre', but one whose rationalism is undermined 'in the kinetic delirium of many effects sequences', which offer 'an escape from technocracy through the window of technological immersion'.[114] Technologically-mediated entertainments – whether fairground rides or Hollywood blockbusters – use sensory address, particularly in the form of spectacle and speed, to assimilate the human body into new conditions of existence: 'Thinking

[112] Bukatman, 2003, p. 3.
[113] De Certeau, 1988, p. 101.
[114] Bukatman, 2003, p. 130.

through the body becomes a way of thinking through technology, of inscribing ourselves within rapidly changing conditions of existence'.[115] For Lefebvre, practical experience is central to human perception: 'long before the analysing, separating intellect, long before formal knowledge, there was an intelligence of the body'.[116] The bodily subtraction and increased quantification and fragmentation of digital space – which come at the cost of both the onscreen body and the viewer's embodied experience – echo the operations of abstract space. However, in visualising the allegorical, non-spatial realm of cyberspace as a spatialised site of potential bodily involvement and activity, action cinema using digital spaces can re-assert the body as a site of understanding in the disembodied global networks of digital communication.

This is certainly the case in *TRON: Legacy*, in which disembodied communication technologies are articulated through the gridded representation of cyberspace (and its control by a non-human technological entity). This technological space is then configured and asserted as a site of materiality and bodily play through action sequences. Presenting as they do 'the body's contact with the world, its rush, its expansiveness, its physical stress and challenge',[117] these sequences generate spaces in which the human form has agency. Sam and his compatriots may be within an allegorical rendering of abstract space, but through their physical movement and improvisational tactics they are also 'in place', not just 'subject to its power' but also 'part of its action, acting on its scene'.[118] Highlighting that all space has to be subjectively experienced and that part of this experience involves visualising the world from an embodied position, the action sequences in *TRON: Legacy* confer bodily spatial knowledge upon sites that normally deny such investment. In their representation of 'freedom of movement, confidence in the body, [and] engagement with the material world',[119] they stress that these are still possible in the new situational geographies of cyberspace, the physical contact with the otherwise abstract world presented necessarily working to make that world more knowable. Spatial appropriation and place-making continue to be central to action sequences even amongst the spectacle of digital effects, and their presence reveals the capacity for such sequences to evoke anxieties regarding the livability of contemporary space, including allegorical spaces such as cyberspace.

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[115] Bukatman, 2003, p. 6.
[116] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 174.
[117] Dyer, 2000, p. 18.
[118] Casey, 2009, p. 23.
[119] Dyer, 2000, p. 18.

Chapter 6: 3-D Space

Throughout this thesis, real locations, interconnected global networks, overtly created action paraspaces, and digital cyberspaces have all been shown to be inhabited and appropriated by action sequences and action protagonists, these sequences and characters critically engaging with the built environment in ways that join up with debates regarding contemporary space and the use and occupation of it by individuals. These engagements appropriate space in a phenomenological and embodied manner, changing it – however fleetingly and negligibly – into a 'place' by demonstrating the potential for spatial knowledge and agency. Following this work, it is now necessary to turn to a technological development in the representation of cinematic space that has recently become central to the release of many large-scale action blockbusters: 3-D exhibition.[1] This mode of film presentation provides a greater degree of spatial information to the viewer through the use of z-axis depth cues created by the superimposition of two identical but marginally off-set images (one for each eye) using projector and eyewear technology. 3-D, in short, works to change the relationship between audiences and the space of a film. The extent to which the format is successful or useful in this regard is much debated. What will be under discussion here, though, is the way in which 3-D exhibition impacts upon the production of space within action sequences.

The use of stereoscopic technology in film projection is not a recent invention, and it is often seen to be deployed in 'waves' by film studios whenever cinema exhibition faces competition from another medium, be it television, VCRs, or online piracy.[2] However, the current application of 3-D across a variety of film genres and in a global marketplace evinces more longevity and durability than previous waves. Used throughout the 2000s for occasional children's films such as *Chicken Little* (2004) and *Bolt* (2008), which were more widely available in non-stereoscopic formats both in cinematic and home viewing contexts, 3-D became more mainstream with the release of *Avatar* (2009). The scale of this film prompted many cinemas to upgrade to digital

[1] The spelling 3-D, rather than 3D, will be preferred here, since the descriptor is an acronym of the compound adjective 'three-dimensional', and should therefore contain a hyphen.

[2] On the origins of stereoscopic imagery, see Ray Zone, *Stereoscopic Cinema and the Origins of 3-D Film: 1838–1952* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2007). On 3-D 'waves' as response to competition, see Sandifer, 2011, p. 62; and William Paul, 'The Aesthetics of Emergence', *Film History* 5.3 (1993), pp. 321–355 (p. 321).

projection systems prior to its release in order to screen it in the stereoscopic format, and it proceeded to take nearly $3 billion in ticket sales worldwide.[3] Subsequently many films, often large-budgeted Hollywood productions, have been released in 3-D. In 2011, for instance, eleven of the twenty-five highest grossing films in North America were released in the stereoscopic format, while over thirty films – many of them large studio blockbusters – were released in 3-D in 2012.[4]

Existing critical work on 3-D often focuses upon notable releases in the format from the 1950s, such as *Kiss Me Kate* (1953) and *Dial M for Murder* (1954). While these accounts are useful, and will form part of the analysis below, they will also be bolstered with analyses of more contemporary film style by the likes of David Bordwell and Richard Maltby. This focus upon formalism and style will be necessary in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of stereoscopy upon the representational strategies of contemporary action cinema (specifically in the action sequence) and the consequences for the depiction and perception of represented spaces.

Two sequences from the Resident Evil franchise (2001 – ongoing) will be analysed for the way in which the adoption of 3-D (only the fourth and fifth instalments are stereoscopic) impacts upon the representation of space during the action sequences. Filmed for the most part in 'native' 3-D (rather than converted in post-production), *Resident Evil: Afterlife* (2010) displays aesthetic approaches that are a direct result of their medium of exhibition, including longer shot lengths and the use of slow motion. The extent to which these strategies are consistent with the grammar of planar cinema will be explored through a comparative analysis with the earlier, non-stereoscopic *Resident Evil* (2002). Following this, the use of 3-D throughout the 2012 action film *Dredd 3D* will be explored. As will be shown, the z-axis is here employed to emphasise salient thematic information. Composition-in-depth and emergence (or theatre space) are both used to construct a multi-layered space which various characters attempt to control, stereoscopic effects being in this way integrated into the narrative and aesthetic operations that have previously been identified in this thesis as central to action

[3] Thomas Elsaesser, 'The "Return" of 3-D: On Some of the Logics and Genealogies of the Image in the Twenty-First Century', *Critical Inquiry* 39.2 (Winter 2013), pp. 217–246 (p. 218).
[4] Anonymous, 'Theatrical Market Statistics 2011', *Motion Picture Association of America*, undated, <http://www.mpaa.org/resources/5bec4ac9-a95e-443b-987b-bff6fb5455a9.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2012].

sequences. Finally, the status of stereoscopic imagery in relation to the previously explored issues surrounding the spatial turn will be investigated.

3-D Critical Theory

By providing additional spatial information along the z-axis – the line of which extends in front of the cinema screen into theatre space, and also continues behind the screen in depth – stereoscopic exhibition depicts space in a way that is different to planar cinema. Whether this difference is an augmentation or marks a complete transformation will be the subject of this chapter, with specific reference to how this changes the depiction of spatial appropriation and attention in action sequences. While the marketing of 3-D films often announces the life-like or immersive qualities of the medium, it is important to stress that 3-D does not present visual information in a way that is 'closer' to our real-life environmental perception, but instead imitates these real-life processes.[5] Spectators are required to look at the screen plane but direct their focus at points in front or behind it, a disparity which – along with the non-concurrence of the left and right eye images and the forced and intangible nature of their impression of depth – underscores the illusionistic quality of 3-D and serves as a reminder that it is a mode of spectacle, potentially different to other modes, but not necessarily nearer to representing human spatial perception. On this observation, Stephen Prince is insistent that '[r]ather than mimicking natural sight, [3-D] offers a heightening of vision',[6] while Ray Zone pointedly describes stereoscopy as a 'surreal replication of real visual space',[7] hinting at both its non-natural quality and its expressive potential as an art form. Stereoscopic films seek to fascinate through a technological process that provides the *illusion* of immersion – that is, a sensation of transportation into the film world – an illusion also explicitly sought by widescreen and IMAX screen technologies, as well as surround sound systems.

Before investigating how stereoscopic film alters the production of space and prompts modifications in film style thanks to its different illusory strategies, it is necessary to briefly indicate how the dimensionality of screen space has been approached in film

[5] On the marketing of 3-D films as 'immersive', see Sandifer, 2011, pp. 63–64.
[6] Prince, 2012, p. 220.
[7] Ray Zone, *3-D Revolution: The History of Modern Stereoscopic Cinema* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012), p. 144.

theory more generally, in this way understanding how 3-D's depth effects might challenge or augment existing practices. This dimensionality is closely linked to the mimetic strategies of Hollywood cinema, the screen plane constructed as a window onto a reality-based scene. In providing the illusion of depth – and in doing so altering or entirely eradicating the perception of the screen plane – does 3-D change the relationship of a viewer to the space being presented? Establishing some parameters of planar cinematic spatial construction will help orient any attempted answer to this question.

Richard Maltby suggests that in Hollywood film the technical elements of the mode of production are made as invisible as possible by a filmmaking style that valorises 'effortlessness and ease of comprehension'.[8] Both narrative and spatial continuity are fundamental to this effortless reception of cinematic content: the film is comprehended by the viewer as representing a three-dimensional space, which they 'can enter imaginatively, unimpeded by the two-dimensionality of the screen', and classical continuity editing confirms the ability of the viewer 'to move freely around the [three-dimensional] space of a scene in search of the ideal viewpoint'.[9] This ideal viewpoint involves the use of the image as a two-dimensional or 'graphic' element, expressing meaning *in addition to* representing space. Screen space provides on the one hand architectural, 'realistic' space and on the other hand graphic, 'demonstrative' space, both being vehicles for narrative-based information. Audiences

> alternate between investing the image with depth and volume to make sense of figure movement and action, and recognizing the screen as a flat plane which shows us the graphic relations between the elements of its image. The curious status of cinematic space as neither strictly two-dimensional nor three-dimensional ensures that our attention to the screen takes the form of a play of looks *at*, *into*, and *through* the screen space.[10]

While for Maltby viewers engage with films in a variety of ways, then, these primarily work towards legible spatial presentation and limiting awareness of the (two-dimensional) viewing conditions.

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[8] Richard Maltby, *Harmless Entertainment: Hollywood and the Ideology of Consensus* (Metuchen, N.J., & London: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1983), p. 190.
[9] Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 311–313.
[10] Maltby, 2003, p. 344, emphasis in original.

Crucial to this is continuity editing. In writing on 'the classical Hollywood style', David Bordwell describes the appropriateness of the designator 'classical' in this context, a word with intimations of 'decorum, proportion, formal harmony, respect for tradition, mimesis, self-effacing craftsmanship, and cool control of the perceiver's response'.[11] Classical continuity editing keeps the spectator engaged in part through its reinforcement of spatial orientation: 'From shot to shot, tonality, movement, and the center of compositional interest shift enough to be distinguishable but not enough to be disturbing'.[12] Founded on principles of character and storytelling, Bordwell suggests that the classical tradition seeks to make the technological and aesthetic properties and innovations of cinema secondary to narrative information. This information includes a grounded and legible sense of space: devices such as establishing shots, consistently deployed axes of action (the 180 degree rule) and rigorous continuity between cuts help viewers comprehend the environment in which the characters are situated, and therefore help them position themselves with these characters.[13]

This presentation of legible, story-oriented space involves the illusion of depth, and Prince points out that planar cinema is already three-dimensional as far as our perception is concerned: 'As observers we perceive spatial layout according to numerous depth cues that act in concert to provide redundant information about the positioning of objects in a volume of space'.[14] These cues include but are not limited to: occlusion and overlap, relative object size, atmospheric hazing and colour shift in distant objects, motion parallax and binocular disparity. Stereoscopic cinema provides additional depth cues by presenting separate images for the left and right eyes, screening them in a manner that prevents the left eye from seeing the image intended for the right, and vice versa. Generally speaking, when placed alongside each other these create a sensation of depth behind the viewing plane, and when placed in an overlapping fashion they seem to extend in front of the viewing plane. These are known as positive parallax and negative parallax respectively. This additional depth information has the

[11] David Bordwell, 'The Classical Hollywood Style, 1917–60', in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger & Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 1–84 (pp. 3–4).

[12] Bordwell, 1985, p. 55. Bordwell, Kristin Thompson and Janet Staiger's *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* outlines a consistent style in Hollywood films between 1917 and 1960. But, as Bordwell makes clear throughout his follow-up *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, the classical system remains in use and fundamental to Hollywood films up to the present day. Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006a).

[13] David Bordwell, 'Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film', *Film Quarterly* 55.3 (Spring 2002), pp. 16–28 (p. 16).

[14] Prince, 2012, p. 199.

potential to benevolently represent space in the manner Bordwell describes, but rather than being assimilated into mainstream film style, stereoscopy is instead understood by many critics to be a gimmick, its provision of z-axis information either unnecessary or an outright assault upon the viewer. 3-D films seek to entertain an audience with a style of narrative cinema essentially similar to non-stereoscopic films (indeed, an overwhelming majority of 3-D films are released and widely viewed in both formats, whether cinematically or in home entertainment contexts). But, following the assertions of Maltby and Bordwell that Hollywood narrative cinema relies upon 'ease of comprehension'[15] and 'self-effacing craftsmanship',[16] writers like Philip Sandifer and William Paul – as will be shown – understand stereoscopic cinema to be unsuccessful, if not outright intolerable, thanks to the way it seems to undermine these central tenets.

Sandifer considers 3-D film to be founded on an unresolvable paradox, the fact of exhibition overriding the classical system's focus on narrative: 'to marvel at an immersive technology is necessarily not to be immersed', he claims.[17] He understands 3-D to inevitably 'demonstrate' itself at all times, calling attention not only to the technological apparatus of the projection system, but also the space in which the projection is occurring: '3-D film is profoundly bound up with an act of spectatorship whereby the theater, instead of disappearing [as it should do in properly immersive cinema], is even more conspicuously visible'.[18] For Sandifer, the 'crucial problem' with 3-D is that it works to provide an 'aesthetic of astonishment' which – subsequent to the end of the cinema of attractions in the early twentieth century, and of which more below – had been supplanted by a 'context of narrative form'.[19] Stereoscopic film is therefore developmentally stuck in a mode of attractional display that cinema generally shook off subsequent to 1906.[20] Paul engages with stereoscopic film in a similar manner, comprehending an elementary obstacle to 3-D exhibition of narrative features:

> To state the problem simply: working within the conventions of a style that generally seeks to make technology unobtrusive, is there any way to use a technology that constantly foregrounds itself, often in the most literal fashion?[21]

[15] Maltby, 1983, p. 190.
[16] Bordwell, 1985, p. 4.
[17] Sandifer, 2011, p. 64.
[18] Sandifer, 2011, p. 69.
[19] Sandifer, 2011, p. 72.
[20] See Gunning, 1990.
[21] William Paul, 'Breaking the Fourth Wall: "Belascoism", Modernism, and a 3-D *Kiss Me Kate*', *Film History* 16.3 (2004), pp. 229–242 (p. 229).

Both Paul and Sandifer identify the failure of 3-D to become widely and lastingly adopted in the 1950s to be a result of its incompatibility with classical continuity. Unlike other initially spectacular technologies such as synchronised sound, colour and widescreen, the history of 3-D, with its appearance and disappearance from mainstream film exhibition in the 1950s and 1980s, suggests that it is resistant to eventual absorption and containment by dominant conventions.

This incompatibility seems to be insurmountable: by confrontationally breaking the fourth wall, Sandifer suggests 3-D films create a different film grammar, 'a grammar of allure, based not on narrative or story, and certainly not on immersive realism' but rather upon objects and the space of the theatre itself.[22] Emergence, or negative parallax composition, in which elements of the image protrude into the space of exhibition, has been credited – along with flawed exhibition technology – for the decline of previous 3-D 'waves'.[23] It is assumed that audiences do not appreciate this style, their presumed objections arising from the breakdown of the separation between screen space and exhibition space, a separation which, though rarely acknowledged in classical continuity, is vital. Writers like Maltby suggest that the purpose of editing in classical filmmaking is to construct a familiar and 'safe space' which avoids disruptive shocks.[24] Emergence potentially violates this safe space.[25]

The extent to which emergence might be thought, in contrast, to work in tandem with other strategies of spatial representation in contemporary cinema will be dealt with below with reference to specific case studies, while in the conclusion to the chapter Paul and Sandifer's objections will be read alongside Lefebvre's work in order to discern 3-D's potential for prompting spatial engagement and connection. For the time being it is enough to suggest that understanding the use of negative parallax as primarily a cheap, disruptive shock fails to take into account both its appeal and its expressive potential. This is borne out in the findings of experiments that explore the relation between viewers and stereoscopic content. In one conducted at the University of Helsinki by Jukka Häkkinen and others, short purpose-made film clips were screened in both stereoscopic and non-stereoscopic formats to participants who were then interviewed

[22] Sandifer, 2011, p. 78.
[23] On the technological problems encountered in the 1950s, see Prince, 2012, pp. 203–204.
[24] Maltby, 2003, p. 335.
[25] Of course other filmmaking strategies, such as jump cuts, rupture this safe space, but are not currently theorised as disruptive in quite the same way.

about their preferences and experiences. The clips avoided the use of negative parallax to a great degree, and the summary of the experiment suggests that 3-D exhibition can increase emotional engagement and audience attention. Importantly, the stereoscopic clips 'elicited many references to being part of the scene', participants describing the spaces represented as seeming 'easy to move into'. These sensations of 'subjective transportation to the film world' occurred quickly (the clips were only twenty seconds in duration), and seemed to be related to feelings that the stereoscopic image provided a greater degree of detail and therefore prompted a wandering gaze. Participants also felt that 'stereoscopic movies were better because they looked more real and life-like', but there were also, contradictorily, many references to stereoscopic images being more artificial and unreal, although this artificiality was 'often regarded as a style effect that created a specific atmosphere in the scene' rather than being a marker of 'bad' image quality.[26] Transportation, or immersion, was therefore not indicative of or reliant upon a perception of greater realism. This experiment suggests that the greater detail provided by stereoscopic exhibition, detail given through z-axis binocular depth cues, invites audiences to linger longer over the image, this invitation taken up by the viewer through their involvement or 'subjective transportation' into the world presented.

3-D presentations of space should therefore not be considered inherently confusing or shocking, nor automatically understood as more realistic; their fascination is not necessarily linked to an assumption of 'lifelikeness'. Moreover, that 3-D is an expressive, rather than automatic depiction of space needs to be taken into account. In both 'native' (that filmed using twinned stereoscopic cameras) and converted content, necessary post-production workflow demands creative choices to be made regarding spatial layout – how far one character is perceived to be from another character is not a recorded fact, but a variable that can be changed as the filmmakers see fit.[27] Using this technology, the depth of the z-axis is often reduced imperceptibly across edits in order to lessen the spatial reorientation required by the spectator.[28] Overall, a film often seeks

[26] Jukka Häkkinen, Takashi Kawai, Jari Takatalo, Tuomas Leisti, Jenni Radun, Anni Hirsaho & Göte Nyman, 'Measuring Stereoscopic Image Quality Experience with Interpretation Based Quality Methodology', *Proceedings of SPIE* 6808, 68081B (27 January 2008) <http://spie.org/x648.html?product_id=760935> [accessed 10 December 2012].

[27] For a description of how subjective this process is, see Dave Itzkoff, 'Eye-Popping for Art's Sake: An Advocate for 3-D Films', *The New York Times*, 20 October 2010 <http://movies.nytimes.com/2010/10/20/movies/20cameron.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0> [accessed 22 February 2012].

[28] On this 'dialling back' of depth, see Prince, 2012, p. 214.

to stay within a 'depth budget' (the total amount of depth in front of and behind the screen), modifying z-axis data to achieve this and to do so in a meaningful way:

> An effective depth score is budget-driven, orchestrating negative and positive parallax across the narrative arc of the film in ways that creatively engage (and don't exhaust) the viewer's attention and image-fusion capabilities and that also embody important attributes of narrative and dramatic meaning.[29]

Furthermore, it should be stressed that stereoscopic cues are used in overtly non-naturalistic ways. The distances involved in typical cinema exhibition 'are well beyond the thresholds for which stereoptic cues work in real life', so when 3-D 'configures distant viewing environments in a film, the results look distinctly different than the normal manner in which the world appears to us'.[30] Zone terms stereoscopic cinema a 'uniquely expressive form',[31] and indeed stereoscopic space is expressive in that it is subjective, involving artistic decisions not just in line with those of planar cinema (such as composition) but also depth budgets and spatial relativity.

When examining the use of these 'expressive' or 'meaningful' spatial cues, it is necessary to understand how they operate in tandem with the established system of spatial production, namely classical continuity editing. Still fundamental to Hollywood cinema, this system is, as indicated, predicated on invisibility, the technological and aesthetic qualities of the mode subsumed beneath (and deployed in the service of) story and character.[32] Yet these technological systems are not invisible, and since 3-D is not to be considered simply as a 'more real' or 'immersive' technique, its effects must be visible to audiences, a fact which does not necessarily impact negatively upon the experience of film spectatorship. (Noticing the expressive use of colour in a film does not undermine the power of a film or take a viewer out of its story, to cite a quick comparison). As shown previously in this thesis, the 'hypermediating'[33] qualities of film invite viewers to concentrate on story even as they take pleasure from the technological and aesthetic processes working towards this immersion. Film spectacle

[29] Prince, 2012, p. 214.
[30] Prince, 2012, pp. 217–218.
[31] Zone, 2012, p. 3.
[32] As Bordwell indicates, this system extends beyond Hollywood, since '[t]he classical tradition has become a default framework for international cinematic expression, a point of departure for nearly every filmmaker' (2006a, p. 12).
[33] Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 21.

can be 'both display and on display', simultaneously convincing fiction and artistic spectacle.[34]

The creative choices involved in 3-D, as well as the capacity of the format to impact upon a viewer's relationship with a film indicate the particular, and particularly spatial, expressivity of the form. Stereoscopic exhibition takes the already existing cinematic attribute of 'direction in depth' to a 'new level', a change that requires concurrent shifts in 'the existing aesthetics of editing and shot composition to accommodate the novel challenges of choreographing the Z-axis as a storytelling device'.[35] For Prince, marrying the new sources of depth information provided by 3-D 'to the old ones that cinema has employed creates aesthetic challenges and opportunities and makes stereo movies a somewhat different medium than planar cinema has been',[36] a medium which as shown does not replicate natural sight but offers an illusory and heightened version of it. The analyses below will indicate how 'somewhat different' this medium of heightened vision is in its representations of space within action sequences, and also how it accords with the spatial focus understood by this thesis to be at the heart of these sequences.

The Resident Evil Franchise – 3-D Space and Film Style

One of the key difficulties in assimilating 3-D visual style to narrative cinema is often thought to lie in film editing. Underlining his interpretation that 3-D calls attention to the space of the theatre rather than that of the fiction being presented, Sandifer suggests that 'cuts within 3-D films are much more jarring and difficult to follow, as they involve much larger reorientations of space'.[37] Sandifer is analysing 3-D films released in the 1950s, but clearly strategies of cutting and reorientations in depth continue to be vital in Hollywood cinema. Bordwell has demonstrated that these approaches to shooting, blocking and editing have 'intensified' throughout the last few decades: while representations of 'space, time, and narrative relations (such as causal connections and parallels)' are essentially similar, they have been raised to a higher 'pitch of emphasis' through shorter average shot lengths (ASLs) and a wider range of lenses, among other techniques, resulting in what he terms an 'intensified continuity' style.[38] Covering a

[34] Darley, 2000, p. 104.
[35] Prince, 2012, pp. 201–202.
[36] Prince, 2012, p. 206.
[37] Sandifer, 2011, p. 73.
[38] Bordwell, 2002, p. 16.

scene from a greater range of angles may 'stem from producers' insistence that there be many alternative takes for postproduction adjustments', but it also means that, given the additional coverage, editors are 'more likely to assemble [any given] scene out of singles taken from many angles'.[39] Bordwell's classification of this sped-up classical style is applicable to most Hollywood films, and especially blockbuster action films, for which intensified continuity (and an intensified version of that) has become the predominant style.

What consequences might this have on the 'reorientations in space' required by the viewer of a stereoscopic narrative film made in the classical style? Director Ridley Scott, cited in *American Cinematographer*, states bluntly that shooting in 3-D is no different for a director than filming in 2-D ('"you've either got an eye, or you haven't"') and that the pace of editing need not be modified for 3-D content.[40] However, Iain Stasukevich writes in an earlier issue of the same magazine that 'a wide, steady frame and a slower pace in editing help to alleviate eyestrain when viewing 3-D', especially during action sequences.[41] This is in line with the findings of Häkkinen et al, in which viewers of short stereoscopic film clips commented that they did not have enough time to see all the details that were available in the image, and that these details made the 3-D clips inherently 'more interesting' than their two-dimensional counterparts. Sensations of stress and even exhaustion arose in participants due to the very brevity of the stereoscopic clips in this experiment, prompting the authors to suggest that stereoscopic material should contain longer shot lengths for reasons of aesthetics and viewer comfort.[42] The same conclusion is also reached by Prince, who suggests that by 'privileging deep focus, stereoscopic cinema necessarily emphasizes longer shot durations', these durations being necessary in order to 'choreograph parallax so that viewers are not given difficult perceptual tasks', the likes of which might be found in fast editing and concurrently hasty spatial reorientation.[43] For him, the 'aesthetics of digital stereoscopic cinema depend on making creative use of the depth effect as a means for expressing narrative, thematic, and emotional meaning' in a way that 'does

[39] Bordwell, 2002, p. 23.
[40] Quoted in Benjamin B, 'Ancient Aliens', *American Cinematographer* 93.7 (Jul 2012), pp. 30–41 (p. 33).
[41] Iain Stasukevich, 'All For One', in *American Cinematographer* 92.11 (Nov 2011), pp. 46–59 (p. 50).
[42] Häkkinen et al, 2008.
[43] Prince, 2012, p. 214. On the need for slower editing, see also Sarah Atkinson, 'Stereoscopic-3D Storytelling – Rethinking the Conventions, Grammar and Aesthetics of a New Medium', *Journal of Media Practice* 12: 2 (2011), pp. 139–156 (p. 152).

not conflict with other image elements'. This demands modifying shooting and editing procedures from those that would be suitable in a planar film.[44]

Filmmaker Paul W. S. Anderson agrees that such modifications are fundamental to working with 3-D. The writer and director of the first, fourth and fifth instalments of the Resident Evil franchise, only the latter two of which have been filmed and exhibited in the stereoscopic format, Anderson states that using 3-D altered his filmmaking processes, impacting upon image composition, editing, writing and production design. Rather than the quick cutting and hand-held camerawork of his earlier films, he states that for *Resident Evil: Afterlife* he

> went for a more classical approach to filmmaking with lots of dolly, track and cranes, and slightly slower, more choreographed fight moves, so you get more fight moves in one take. It just looked better in 3D and it allowed you to experience the space a little more. It really altered the way I shot the movie completely.[45]

Anderson's comments regarding a reinstatement of a classical approach in his style point not to American cinema between 1917 and 1960,[46] but rather denote a slight de-intensification of intensified continuity (fewer cuts, less hand-held images). These alterations in shooting procedure impact upon the presentation of space within the action sequences.

Prior to examining Anderson's approach to 3-D filmmaking in *Resident Evil: Afterlife* it will be necessary to analyse a sequence for comparative purposes from the non-stereoscopic *Resident Evil* (with the acknowledged caveats that though both are written and directed by Anderson and are from the same franchise, they have been made and released eight years apart and have minor but relevant thematic and storytelling divergences). Based on a popular videogame, *Resident Evil* follows an amnesiac woman, Alice, and a small squad of soldiers as they enter an underground bio-weapon-production facility called The Hive. Here, they discover that a virus has been released which re-animates the dead. In their efforts to retrieve an antidote for this and return to the surface the protagonists also contend with a large, mutating creature known (but not

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[44] Prince, 2012, p. 209.
[45] Quoted in Christina Radish, 'Paul W. S. Anderson Interview RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE 3D', *Collider*, 3 August 2010 <http://collider.com/comic-con-paul-ws-anderson-interview-resident-evil-afterlife-3d-the-three-musketeers/41825/> [accessed 3 October 2012].
[46] These dates are taken from Bordwell, 1985.

within the diegetic world of the film) as the Licker. Designed around movement through restricted space, the film has strong horror elements but predominantly operates in an action mode, privileging fight scenes and race-against-the-clock chases. One of these closes the film, as the protagonists board an underground tram to exit The Hive before it locks permanently, only to have their escape frustrated by the Licker, which kills all but two of them.

The sequence favours tight, close angles that often depict a single unit of action (the turn of a head, the closing of a door). An exception to this is an early shot tracking quickly around Alice as she crouches in the middle of the carriage, sparks flying, the danger inherent in the space surrounding her indicated by the kaleidoscopic spectacle of the mobile camera. This introduces the action effectively, situating Alice within a small space besieged by a threat that is unpredictable and kinetic, and functions as an orienting master shot of sorts. When she is not the subject of a tight close up, Alice remains situated in the mid-ground in a recurring long-lens shot, foreground and background visible (if slightly out of focus) in ways clearly motivated by the action. This long-lens re-asserts the geography of the fight at key moments, including when another protagonist, Matt, swings a collection of pipes across the carriage, and Alice is shown ducking as they move forward; and a shot shortly after, from the feet of the Licker, the pipes shown collapsing in the foreground, Alice pinned in the mid-ground, and Matt in the background behind her. The exchange of blows between Alice and the Licker are demonstrated with panning shots, be it a slow motion pan of a bullet flying towards the Licker, or a quick pan following a tongue as it jolts suddenly toward Alice. The shots are overwhelmingly hand-held and jittery. The sequence is 2 minutes and 34 seconds in duration and has 146 cuts, yielding an ASL of just over one second.[47]

In its use of rapid editing, divergent lens lengths, close framings and ostentatious camera mobility (the rotating track around Alice), the sequence adheres to Bordwell's classifications of intensified continuity, 'using brief shots to maintain the audience's interest but also making each shot yield a single point, a bit of information'.[48] The action is heavily splintered, but the high-speed editing and close framing respects axes of action and eye-line matches. Though the spatial data provided is fragmented, it is nonetheless adequate thanks to earlier wide shots of the carriage, simple geography (the

[47] Timed between 1.21.04 and 1.23.38 on the Region 2 DVD.
[48] Bordwell, 2007a.

carriage is a generally plain box), further orientation shots featuring clear planes of depth, and the use of cause-and-effect editing. Despite the pitch of the scene, then, it accedes (just) to Bordwell's definition of 'the classic precepts of Hollywood spatial construction', breaking dramatic action into segments and keeping eye-lines coherent.[49]

Continuity techniques are used to depict a space which is threatening and frightening, but also one that is legible, if only marginally. This is vital, as the drama of the sequence is predicated upon knowledge of spatial relations: Alice is situated in the middle of the carriage, the Licker is in front of her, Matt behind; the door release switch is next to Matt, and the door is situated beneath the Licker. These positions and relations are fundamental to the struggle that subsequently occurs. Apart from the beginning of the sequence, when characters move into this arrangement, the staging is consistent, each element grounded in place, and it is partly this fixity which allows the sequence to cut so fast yet remain coherent.

Spatial orientation is therefore minimal but adequate (although the space is far from marginalised – the buttons, doors, and paraphernalia in the carriage are vital). By comparison, *Resident Evil: Afterlife* continually refers back to the space in which action takes place through wider framings, slower cutting and the use of the stereoscopic format. In *Afterlife*, the fourth film of the franchise, Alice's adventures and battles continue, as she travels across North America and collects several survivors of the zombie plague that has turned the planet into a wasteland. As Anderson makes clear in interviews and on the Region 2 DVD commentary, the film was intended to be exhibited stereoscopically from its inception, and was written, shot and edited accordingly.[50] 3-D is for him a 'holistic' experience, requiring all aspects of the production to be approached 'from a 3-D point-of-view', as he states on the commentary. This method, he suggests, exploits the format to the best degree by emphasising not only the spectacle of the film but also by providing more arresting images in non-spectacular moments. This '3-D point-of-view' impacts upon the presentations of space in the action sequences, as shown in a sequence a little over halfway through in which Alice and another protagonist, Claire, enter into combat in a

[49] Bordwell, 2006a, p. 161.
[50] On this commentary Anderson also states that when writing the film he aimed to feature as many 'either tight claustrophobic environments or environments that have a lot of depth and perspective in them, or big wide landscapes that again had a lot of scope in them', because all of these would look 'good' in the 3-D format.

prison shower room with a lumbering antagonist termed by the credits (but not by the characters within the film) the Axeman.

The fight begins after the Axeman kills one of Alice's company, slicing him in half. Alice launches herself into the air to kick the Axeman in the face, this action shown in a spacious wide shot that keeps Alice's entire body in frame, and which switches to extreme slow motion as she nears her target. This establishes a pattern of slow motion and occasional speed-ramping throughout the sequence, as well as a tendency for at least the entire upper bodies of the actors to be the focus of the framing, not just their faces or manipulating limbs. The Axeman subsequently swings his axe around the room, the camera often positioned so that both the axe and the debris it generates are moving towards the spectator using negative parallax effects. The tempo of the sequence is notably protracted at times. Quick cuts are used but are often combined with lengthier mid-shots that are held for a few seconds: when the Axeman is about to kill Alice, who has been knocked unconscious, an above and over-the-shoulder shot shows him getting hit by several gunshots in a cut lasting four seconds or so; the following shot, also four seconds, is a slow track in on Claire as she continues to fire her gun in moderate slow motion. This is then followed by two quick cuts as the axe is swung at Claire, her movements all framed in mid-shot from just above her waist. After the Axeman has severed several pipes in the room, leading fountains of water to spray excessively, the film returns to extreme slow motion for several shots, including a wide overhead which shows the distance of the two combatants but is otherwise unmotivated. Later, when the Axeman throws his weapon at Claire, this is shown in a point-of-view shot, the axe flying along the z-axis and entering negative parallax as it nears the camera lens. Throughout the sequence other elements are occasionally placed in theatre space, such as pipes in the foreground of tracking shots and guns aimed towards the camera, and the fountains of water generally give definition to the planes of the z-axis at and behind the screen plane, highlighting the existence of such depth cues. The sequence is 2 minutes and 53 seconds long, and contains 83 cuts, meaning it has an ASL of just over two seconds.[51]

In comparison with the sequence from *Resident Evil*, the cutting is clearly slower, with shots lasting on average twice as long in the stereoscopic film. Furthermore, tight close-

[51] Timed between 1.02.17 and 1.05.10 on the Region 2 DVD.

ups and hand-held shots are avoided in favour of mid- or full-body framing. *Resident Evil: Afterlife* features no rapid tracks and pans, and instead uses occasional slow tracks and subtle re-framings which merely keep the shot from being static, rather than showing additional or linked actions. Both sequences use a single shot to show an action, such as the closing of a door or a jump into the air, but in *Afterlife* these are vastly extended through the use of slow motion. The digital slow motion image is highly detailed, and its use on static or very slowly moving shots allows the viewer to examine at some leisure the overlapping objects contained throughout the planes of the z-axis, something also encouraged by the use of wide angle lenses, which keep these many layers generally in focus. The sequence favours forward or processional z-axis movement, depicting the motion of things towards, through and beyond the screen plane into theatre space, be they debris, axes or bodies. Wide shots showing the combatants facing off against each other, whether from the side or from above, provide a sense of spatial orientation and exactness absent from the railway carriage sequence in *Resident Evil*. However, this orientation is incomplete: the spaces in which Alice is knocked unconscious and in which Claire runs from the Axeman are not integrated, and Alice re-appears at the end of the sequence in a manner that has required her to slip unnoticed across the room, a movement not shown in order to maximise the surprise of her return.

Many of these changes draw attention to the movement of the bodies in the space, as well as their weight and relative agility. The use of wide and slowed-down shots to show units of action highlights the bodily work involved in the completion of the action, in addition to the action itself. This is also aided by lighter images, the diffuse sunlight in the shower room aiding comprehension of the physical action on display, while the darker and occasionally stroboscopic lighting in the carriage in *Resident Evil* provides more perceptual thrill without aiding legibility. This carriage sequence focuses on the chaotic and shocking sensations of the attack, the splintered space and close shots underlining panic and emotional desperation, the long lens orienting shot squashing the various planes of action into close physical proximity to one another (though they are differentiated through focal length). Threats in this environment are sustained and constant, responded to with frantic off-the-cuff ingenuity. *Afterlife*, by contrast, accentuates the physicality of those involved through its wider shots, showing their consideration of the situation at hand, and their acrobatic agility and aptitude in weaving around danger. The slow motion highlights the gruelling and protracted nature of the

combat depicted, and both this agility and the threats to the combatants are effectively augmented by the use of z-axis depth information, which shows how the mobile spatial relations are changing. In *Resident Evil*, projectiles move from right-to-left (Alice's bullet) or left-to-right (the Licker's tongue). Moments of audience confrontation are limited to a zombie lunging towards the camera in an image designed for quick shock value, or the Licker's burning body drifting towards the spectator after it has been killed (the camera placement of this latter demonstrating Alice and Max's escape from danger rather than their confrontation of it). Processional z-axis movement in *Afterlife* is instead sustained and often threatening. It is also presented in slow motion, a technique prompting image contemplation and awe along with sensations of shock.

The location in *Afterlife* is itself dictated by the on-set technical requirements of the format, as manoeuvring the bulky 3-D camera rig around the tight space of the carriage in *Resident Evil* would have proved problematic. The sensation of depth would also have been frustrated by the proximity of the walls in the space.[52] The shower room, by contrast, is a larger, airier environment, the shower pipes providing not only fountains of water which exploit stereoscopic depth planes but which also themselves provide objects to place into theatre space during tracks, a device which consistently underscores the area in front of the screen plane as being open to violation, something achieved much more overtly during the swings of the axe and its flight towards Alice and Claire. Stereoscopy additionally places stress upon the scope and depth of the space to be manoeuvred through and controlled, something also augmented by the mobility of the characters, who run and rebound through and across the space in a manner that their fixed counterparts in *Resident Evil* do not.

The sequence in *Afterlife*, then, features choreographed parallax positioning, framing-in-depth, and longer shot durations, the latter of which were seen to be explicitly sought by viewers in experiments investigating stereoscopic reception. These are at least in part a result of technical considerations: Anderson makes clear that the weight, size and cost of the 3-D cameras, rig and equipment dictated shooting choices, such as filming on stages whenever possible, avoiding hand-held shots, and what he calls 'shooting to cut':

[52] As Glen MacPherson notes regarding production design in a stereoscopic film, '[y]ou don't want to put furniture up against the walls, you want to build some depth into the sets and into the blocking'. Quoted in R. Emmet Sweeney, 'Interview: Glen McPherson, 3D DP', *Film Comment*, 19 September 2012 <http://www.filmcomment.com/entry/interview-glenn-macpherson-3d-dp-resident-evil> [accessed 3 October 2012].

since filming in 3-D is more time-intensive and therefore expensive, less set-ups are possible, forcing the director 'to get it right on the day, and know how that's going to cut together.'[53]

This restriction is important. Bordwell notes that intensified continuity arises as a result of what he calls 'shooting to protect', a method of filming a scene with multiple cameras from a range of possible angles at the same time, providing a great deal of choice in editing.[54] As a result of this approach, cameras film from further away with telephoto lenses so as not to impinge on the sightlines of other cameras, and lighting is generally less expressive and flatter in order to do duty for this range of shots.[55] For Bordwell, as a result of these changes, 'cameras really don't *work their way into the space* as much as they do in single-camera shooting'.[56] Anderson's method of 'shooting to cut' for 3-D by contrast allows for more precise camera placement, and correspondingly more specified lighting and production design, all of which are composed with the impactful employment of stereoscopic depth in mind.

Spatial strategies involving production design and location, as well as the choreographing and representation of the action itself, are therefore deeply influenced by the 3-D format. However, these changes do not drastically change the fundamentals of film style being employed. It is true that 3-D's 'grammar of allure' as defined by Sandifer[57] can be identified here, as *Afterlife* sends various objects into theatre space. But it also closely adheres to the spatial legibility defined as crucial to classical filmmaking and upheld by intensified continuity, establishing and re-establishing changing spatial relationships in ways indebted to the continuity style. It might further

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[53] As he also states on the commentary to *Afterlife*, for his previous film, the non-stereoscopic *Death Race* (2009), around one a half million feet of raw film was shot, while *Afterlife* accumulated roughly half that much. These restrictions might be compared to the sudden aesthetic changes prompted by the production of sound films in America the 1920s, when the camera became bulky and difficult to move.

[54] David Bordwell, 'Cutting Remarks: On THE GOOD GERMAN, Classical Style, and the Police Tactical Unit', *Observations on Film Art*, 15 November 2006b <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2006/11/15/cutting-remarks-on-the-good-german-classical-style-and-the-police-tactical-unit/> [accessed 22 October 2012]. This style was adopted for dialogue scenes on *Gladiator* (2000), in which seven cameras recorded a scene in the search for 'something good' (Bordwell, 2006a, p. 154), and for action sequences in *The Expendables* (2010), in which five cameras, operating independently, captured footage which was put together in a purposefully 'disjointed' manner in the editing room (David Bordwell, 'Bond vs. Jackie Chan: Jackie Shows How It's Done', *Observations on Film Art*, 15 September 2010 <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2010/09/15/bond-vs-chan-jackie-shows-how-its-done/> [accessed 4 October 2012]).

[55] Bordwell states that 'all cinematographers grant that lighting an overall scene so that it looks right from several camera angles requires many compromises' (Bordwell, 2006b).

[56] Bordwell, 2006b, emphasis added.

[57] Sandifer, 2011, p. 78.

be suggested that the shocks provoked by the use of negative parallax here are no less confrontational and jarring than the hectic editing tempo and very tight framing of the sequence from *Resident Evil*. In that film, establishing shots are limited to occasional brief telephoto glimpses down the train carriage, and a spectacular and confrontational aesthetic is present in the slow motion image of the bullet flying through the air (an image markedly devoid of contextual background) and an attack by a zombie directly at the camera lens, moments that might themselves be associated with stereoscopic film grammar. Such examples indicate that some aesthetic strategies that define 3-D are also deployed in planar cinema. Stereoscopy may encourage the use of slow motion, the tracking of objects as they drift through space, and shocks reliant upon movement towards the screen, but these devices are already in use within intensified continuity prior to the recent adoption of digital 3-D technology. In *Afterlife*, moreover, these elements are presented in a manner in which spatial freedom and an emphasis on spatial navigation are far more overt. The urge to provide the 'best view' is demonstrated more forcefully through slow motion and wider framing, as well as a greater focus upon bodily movement in space. Certainly, in line with Anderson's statement above, the viewer 'experiences the space a little more' thanks to the consequences and aesthetics of filming in the 3-D format, as well as the additional z-axis data itself.

As Bordwell concludes in relation to the use of intensified continuity, 'today's new techniques are inserted into the stable system of representing space and time, and though they do gain a certain freshness, they are still tamed to well-established purposes',[58] and he adds pertinently that 'the favored technical devices [of Hollywood cinema] have changed, but the spatial *system* of classical Hollywood continuity remains intact'.[59] This is true also of stereoscopic cinema, the use of which, in action sequences as elsewhere, encourages viewers to 'experience the space a little more' partly as a result of its depth cues (which are designed and manipulated in the service of both spatial legibility and spectacular attraction) but also as a result of technical considerations which can prompt a camera to 'penetrate the space' of a scene in a manner that intensified continuity does not tend to do.[60] The use of negative parallax should not be understood, as it is by Paul and Sandifer, as a challenge to conventional

[58] Bordwell, 2006a, p. 174.
[59] Bordwell, 2006a, p. 180, emphasis in original.
[60] Bordwell, 2006b.

film viewing, but rather another stylistic element that viewers are able to comprehend and which provides additional spatial and narrative information.

Dredd 3D – Immersive Space

In defining action-adventure as a film genre Steve Neale notes that 'even where locations are restricted, as they often are in prison and submarine films, space, the control of space, and the ability to move freely through space or from one space to another are always important'.[61] Following this observation, 3-D can be understood to have important consequences for the representational strategies of contemporary action films. Owen Weetch, a researcher on 3-D film and the impact of the format upon the representational strategies of particular genres, states that '[g]enres that in some way depend on the space or environment in which their stories take place certainly do benefit – exponentially – from the additional dimension'.[62] For Weetch, the stereoscopic staging of *Avatar* absolutely suits and expands upon its central narrative of entering a wondrous new environment, an environment to be contemplated and cherished. Similarly suitable, but in quite different ways, is the use of stereoscopy in the action film *Dredd 3D* (hereafter *Dredd*), in which an immense skyscraper becomes a violent battleground. Shot and released in the 3-D format, the stereoscopic effects accentuate spatial qualities important to the structuring of the film and the audience's involvement in the action, the precise nature of this involvement being crucial. Accordingly, an analysis of the use of stereoscopy in the film will indicate the medium's expressive potential with regards to the action genre, an expressiveness founded upon spatial representation.

Richard Dyer understands action films to be founded on a fundamental paradox: while they present 'an active engagement with the world' through their action protagonists, who operate as viewer-surrogates, their very enjoyment requires 'allowing them to come to you […and] take you over'. For Dyer,

> we may identify with [the action protagonist], imagine the rush of excitement as we brace ourselves against, and master, the world [as they do]; but we're also

[61] Neale, 2004, p. 74.
[62] Quoted in Lucy Tobin, 'Is 3D the Medium of the Future?', *The Guardian*, 21 November 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/nov/21/3d-cinema-television-film-tintin> [accessed 24 October 2012].

> letting ourselves be carried along, going with the flow of the movie, ecstatically manipulated.[63]

Dredd presents this oscillation of active engagement and stunned image contemplation through the use of stereoscopy. The issues surrounding conspicuous obtrusiveness that Paul and Sandifer identify in stereoscopic exhibition are employed in the film not only to depict space in depth but also to encode thematic meanings tied to space and control. Bordwell notes that '[i]f the Hollywood film is a clear pane of glass, the audience can be visualized as a rapt onlooker',[64] yet *Dredd* frequently uses emergence to break this pane of glass, in doing so engaging a viewer by involving the space of the theatre with the space presented by the film.

An adaptation of a long-running comic book, the film depicts a day in the life of two Judges – law enforcement officials in a dystopian future – named Dredd and Anderson, who struggle to survive within a sealed 200-storey building home to a clan of violent drug dealers who are trying to kill them. Moving up through the building, a 'mega block' called Peach Trees, the Judges are constrained by the operations of Ma-Ma, the leader of the clan, who has a small army and access to local security infrastructure. Action sequences revolve around the efforts by the Judges to escape an environment as they are bombarded by heavy gunfire, and the film evokes their confinement by eschewing many exterior shots and scenes, instead privileging the corridors and massive central void of Peach Trees, whose many levels all resemble each other, particularly in their disrepair. The scope of the space being contested, as well as the restrictions within it, are illustrated through z-axis cues both behind and in front of the screen plane, the use of which is precisely managed to extend their communicative function.

The film situates its central characters within a volumetric, three-dimensional space that is occasionally very deep (the atrium) but more often than not is tight and restrictive. Additionally, it frequently places objects and architecture in front of these characters, positioning them between planes of action. In an early scene, Dredd kills a man who has taken a hostage in a fast food restaurant, and throughout the sequence he and the hostage-taker are positioned behind obstructions like tables and pillars. In 3-D this composition effectively clutters the environment and hems in the characters, simulating

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[63] Dyer, 2000, p. 21.
[64] Bordwell, 1985, p. 37.

the narrative setting of an over-populated, hyper-dense metropolis, as well as embellishing the central dynamic of the scene: a villain takes a human shield around whom Dredd must aim.

However, the film is constructed according to classical or intensified continuity, the editing often rapid and shots framed very tight and close. This works against a tendency towards visual exploration in stereoscopic moving images. Viewer attention tends to wander in 3-D clips far more than their 2-D counterparts thanks to the volume of space they represent, and this lessens the comparative amount of attention paid to a central actor.[65] Cinematographers working in 3-D accordingly compose shots to direct the gaze of the audience and prevent this dispersal, manipulating lighting and mise-en-scene to this end.[66] However, perhaps influenced by the groundbreaking dystopian science-fiction film *Blade Runner* (1982), the cinematography of *Dredd* employs a cluttered mise-en-scene of garbage, graffiti and decay. Along with the pace of the cutting, especially during action scenes, the detail of the environment generates a tension between a desire to explore the stereoscopic space on the one hand and the use of planar focus cues to direct the eye towards the action protagonist – who is situated between unfocused planes of potential interest – on the other. This is not the volumetric, acrobatic space of *Resident Evil: Afterlife*, nor the lush scenography of *Avatar*, but rather a constrictive, overpopulated maze whose impediments are made all the more perceptually troubling in 3-D. The stereoscopic effect therefore accentuates the inability of the Judges to take full possession of the space in which they move, contributing to the central conflict of the film.[67]

The person truly in charge of Peach Trees is Ma-Ma, and her mastery of space and time is forcefully shown at her character's introduction. She has taken slo-mo, a futuristic drug which as one character explains 'makes the brain feel as if time is passing at one percent its normal speed', a sensation the film evokes through the use of extreme slow motion, heavy colourisation and parallax effects. In a full bath, Ma-Ma splashes water in front of her, these droplets entering theatre space. Singled out by reviewers, this is a

[65] Jukka Häkkinen, Takashi Kawai, Jari Takatalo, Reiko Mitsuya, & Göte Nyman, 'What Do People Look at When They Watch Stereoscopic Movies?', *Proceedings of SPIE* 7524, 75240E (18 February 2010) <http://spiedigitallibrary.org/proceeding.aspx?articleid=775943> [accessed 10 December 2012].
[66] Jay Holben, 'Conquering New Worlds', in *American Cinematographer* 91.1 (January 2010), pp. 32–47.
[67] As Maltby notes, '[c]haracters in Hollywood movies have a pressing need to establish themselves spatially, or dominate the composition or to keep a secure hold on their place in it, in order to maintain their narrative centrality' (Maltby, 2003, p. 318).

scene of 'dreamy sumptuousness' and 'iridescen[ce]' in the words of Joe Morgenstern,[68] and is described by Antonia Quirk as 'unusually expressive and meaningful 3D,' both 'effective and affecting,' making a viewer 'want to pluck each droplet from the space that the 3D has landed it in' and carefully and calmly examine it.[69] This moment accords with elements of Sandifer's model of 3-D film as 'demonstrative', since a particular kind of spectacle based on emergence is made possible and indulged by stereoscopic exhibition. Both the technology and the fact of exhibition are called attention to here in a manner reminiscent of Tom Gunning's description of pre-1906 cinema, a 'cinema of attractions' that saw cinema 'less as a way of telling stories than as a way of presenting a series of views to an audience, fascinating because of their illusory power'.[70] Linking Gunning's description to 3-D, Paul states that in the cinema of attractions mode of filmmaking 'the fascination of the image as image supersedes the demands of the narrative,' stalling or relegating the story to the sidelines.[71] This fascination is therefore seen by some in the context of 3-D to undermine the classical style and the involvement of the audience in the film's story along with it.[72]

While this sequence is enthralling in a manner that might seem to divorce it from narrative momentum, it is important to note that it is both motivated by diegetic drug-taking (itself a central plot device), and that – through the employment of 3-D – it accentuates Ma-Ma's ability to control and manipulate space. Ma-Ma violates the screen plane, flinging water out towards the audience, addressing the space of the viewer. As another character makes clear when describing her, 'she has control of everything,' and this includes the theatre itself. Paul, Sandifer and John Belton all suggest that 3-D's use of emergence makes an audience more aware of their viewing situation than required or desired by classical continuity.[73] *Dredd*'s expressive use of

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[68] Joe Morgenstern, 'Vivid 'Dredd 3D' Makes Rival Thrillers Look Flat', *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 September 2012 <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390443995604578005201824449348.html> [accessed 8 October 2012].

[69] Antonia Quirk, 'Sadness at the Heart of Dredd'. *The Financial Times*, 6 September 2012 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/046d5296-f76b-11e1-8c9d-00144feabdc0.html#axzz28nHJqVtI> [accessed 8 October 2012].

[70] Gunning, 1990, p. 57.

[71] Paul, 1993, p. 321.

[72] Thomas Elsaesser suggests that an analysis of contemporary 3-D inspired by Gunning's model is in danger of limiting awareness of how it functions both economically and industrially (Elsaesser, 2013, p. 237).

[73] Paul, 1993, pp. 335–336; Sandifer, 2011, p. 68–69; John Belton, 'Digital 3D Cinema: Digital Cinema's Missing Novelty Phase', *Film History* 24.2 (2012), pp. 187–195 (p. 194).

emergence during this and other slo-mo sequences uses this potential spatial desegregation of screen plane and viewer to emphasise the extent of control that is being orchestrated by the characters in the film, some of whom are able to purposefully send objects into negative parallax.[74]

This equation of emergence, slow motion and spatial power is upheld shortly afterwards, when Dredd's capture of a drug-dealer is depicted in a similar fashion, streaks of blood flung into theatre space at a fraction of normal speed. The negative parallax effects are here augmented through the use of false widescreen bars that imperceptibly appear at the beginning of the sequence, and over which the emerging blood splatter is superimposed, providing an even greater sensation of extension from the screen. The power of the Judge is effectively demonstrated by his ability to launch this debris into audience space, a dynamic further manifested in one of the final scenes, in which he gets the better of Ma-Ma, dosing her with slo-mo and throwing her out of a window at the top of the atrium. The sequence accentuates Dredd's attained mastery by placing him in the centre of the frame and surrounding him, and the viewer, with glass fragments. The frequent visual occlusion of the character described earlier is here visibly removed, as Dredd stands full-frame and generates the debris that floats in theatre space rather than being hemmed in by it. Ma-Ma's contrasting loss of mastery is underlined shortly thereafter: when she lands at the base of the atrium she is filmed from below, her face hitting the screen plane and erupting with blood in a lengthy slow motion shot. The separation of her space and audience space remains palpably intact, her previous ability to seemingly enter the space of the theatre removed, an absence of mastery that effectively kills her, since it is upon the reinstated screen plane that she meets her bloody demise.

What the many studies and writers working on 3-D cited in this chapter have in common is an assumption that the use of negative parallax calls attention to the space of the theatre. Stereoscopic films, it therefore follows, prompt spatial awareness in a very direct way. Within the context of the action sequence, such attention operates in tandem with the other elements of film form, analysed throughout this thesis, that depict and provoke spatial awareness (such as the appropriation of space through physical acts and

[74] As Miriam Ross suggests, the abundant depth planes of 3-D locate the viewer 'within and in relation to, rather than at a fixed distance from, the content' of the film. Ross, 'The 3-D Aesthetic: *Avatar* and Hyper-Haptic Visuality', *Screen* 53.4 (Winter 2012), pp. 381–397 (p. 383).

ingenuity). In *Dredd*, the ability to prompt spectatorial spatial contemplation is incited by drug use, but it is also closely tied to character and relative spatial control. It is managed across the narrative to indicate the extent to which characters have appropriated space for their own ends. This process of gaining spatial control is mirrored, for Paul, in the audience's own reactions: with each successive object that emerges into theatre space, he suggests, 'we still experience the shock to our nervous systems but we also learn we can stare it down without threat of actual dismemberment.' As a consequence we gradually gain 'a kind of mastery over the peculiarities of our binocular vision'.[75] Dredd's control of space is therefore our control of space, and in this way the passivity of action film spectatorship identified earlier by Dyer is in some senses addressed and modified.

The use of negative parallax in the slo-mo sequences directly address the viewer and the space of viewing, in doing so underlining the themes of spatial mastery that run through the film. Rather than highlight the submissive viewing position of audiences by calling attention to this mismatch, these stylistic effects involve and engage. They invite the viewer to become an active participant and meet the film halfway, their use of slow motion assisting this by allowing and encouraging contemplation of the image-in-depth.[76] Sandifer may consider the film grammar of 3-D to be 'a grammar of allure', based on objects and the space of the theatre itself rather than on narrative and 'immersive realism',[77] but *Dredd* uses this theatre space to supplement the presentation of a battle for control of space upon which the narrative is predicated. 3-D is for Sandifer a medium of spectacle, and is therefore a medium 'about the space in which it seems to project [objects]', something that for him precludes its usefulness as a communicator of narrative or expressive meaning.[78] Yet this comment itself underlines the concurrent concerns of action cinema and stereoscopic exhibition: both mobilise space through spectacle, drawing attention to the relationship between onscreen bodies and the environments through which they move and in which they have agency. Stereoscopic exhibition extends this space into the theatre, and prompts greater spatial

[75] Paul, 1993, pp. 343–344.
[76] Barry Sandrew uses some neurophysiologial sources to back up his claims that 3D films engage an audience in an active way, unlike the passive viewing solicited by 2D films, thanks to their lack of stereoscopic information. Sandrew, 'Engaged in 2D and Immersed in 3D', *Reflections on the Growth of 3D*, 1 February 2012 <http://bsandrew.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/passive-voyeurs-look-at-2d-and-3d-movie.html> [accessed 24 October 2012].
[77] Sandifer, 2011, p. 78.
[78] Sandifer, 2011, p. 78.

awareness among viewers thanks to its additional depth information and its expressive use of these dimensions.

Chapter Conclusion

As studies focusing on the emergence effect in 3-D by Paul and Sandifer have shown, stereoscopic exhibition addresses its viewer and the space that this viewer occupies. Objects and bodies move through the screen plane and into the space of the theatre, and in this way action sequences are provided the opportunity to feature space in a manner not available to planar cinema, not just imparting a greater degree of depth cues with the addition of the z-axis in positive parallax (the use of which can make spatial relations in a scene clearer), but also by utilising the space of reception itself through negative parallax effects. *Resident Evil: Afterlife* does this many times, turning the screen plane into an invisible window through which weapons and other objects can be propelled, while *Dredd* uses layered compositions of planes to situate and restrict its characters within a hostile space. The 'immersive' effect of 3-D should therefore not be understood as an ability to simulate reality. Rather, it is useful to understand 3-D in the same terms that Vivian Sobchack applies to the contemporary use of slow motion in action sequences, in which 'the significant question [is] less about our belief in the *reality* of the live-action image than about our wonderment at the profoundly *real grip* that image ha[s] on embodied consciousness'.[79]

If not judging the use of stereoscopy with reference to realism, then how might the spatial presentation it provides be understood in light of critical spatial theory? As Lefebvre notes in *The Production of Space*, '[a]ctivity in space is restricted by that space', space commanding the bodies within it through its very concreteness.[80] Elsewhere, he indicates that he considers globalisation and the technologies of twentieth century media to have made their audiences 'passive' and 'infantile', since the world is presented in 'the mode of spectacle and the gaze'.[81] In line with some early film theory then, Lefebvre seems to suggest that images 'weaken the spectator's consciousness',

[79] Vivian Sobchack, '"Cutting to the Quick": *Techne*, *Physis*, and *Poiesis* and the Attractions of Slow Motion', in Wanda Strauven (ed), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), pp. 337–351 (pp. 339–340, emphasis in original).
[80] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 143.
[81] Lefebvre, 2002, p. 224.

reducing 'contact with actuality' and 'lull[ing] the mind'.[82] This is in line with some critical work on post-Enlightenment vision, a regime of objective truth which, in privileging the perspective of the monocular camera obscura, appropriated the world in a systematised manner for the benefit of 'a private unitary consciousness detached from any active relation with an exterior'.[83] This model of vision is fundamental to both classical Hollywood continuity and its contemporary incarnation intensified continuity, leading writers on film to speak of Hollywood's 'ideology of consensus',[84] or the work it performs situating viewers 'within ideology'.[85] Such theories in turn echo Lefebvre's words on contemporary capitalistic space as an aspect of the hegemony 'of one class' which claims cohesiveness and immortality and so makes the individual within it a passive subject.[86]

Film, for Lefebvre, far from being able to reveal truth, is rather an 'incriminated' medium, like all those based on what he describes as the false equation 'readability–visibility–intelligibility', which reinforces errors concerning the nature of space rather than revealing them.[87] How his opinions on the regime of the image in Western society impact upon the use of his work by this thesis will be addressed in the next chapter, but for the time being it is vital to note a later passage of Lefebvre's in which he states that, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the 'predominance of the visual – image, spectacle – over the corporeal is declining', citing as evidence 'the search for richer (three dimensional) images'.[88] In this, he presages Thomas Elsaesser's work on the transition from an imagistic culture to one predicated on interactivity, a change brought about by technological developments. 'Embedding in layered spaces, navigating multiple temporalities, and interacting with data-rich, simulated, and hybrid environments probably requires redefining what we mean by seeing, by images', suggests Elsaesser, and he understands stereoscopic exhibition (in a variety of contexts)

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[82] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), p.159.
[83] Jonathan Crary, 'Modernizing Vision', in Linda Williams (ed), *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film* (New Brunswick & New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), pp. 23–35 (p. 26).
[84] Maltby, 1983.
[85] Todd McGowan, 'Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and Its Vicissitudes', in *Cinema Journal* 42.3 (Spring 2003), pp. 27–47 (p. 39).
[86] Lefebvre, 1991, p. 10. The concept of hegemony he takes from Antonio Gramsci. See Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks: Selections*, Quintin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (trans.) (London: Laurence & Wishart, 1971).
[87] Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 96–97.
[88] Lefebvre, 2005, p. 102, parentheses in original.

to be a method of representing contemporary space suited to the latter's traits of simultaneity, simulation and interactivity.[89]

For Elsaesser, '*what is being promoted with 3-D is not a special effect as special effect but as the new default value of digital vision*, presuming a layered, material, yet also mobile and pliable space',[90] stereoscopy making audiences into 'historically contingent actor[s] in a transitional but necessary arrangement in an ongoing transformational process'.[91] 3-D therefore appeals to a spatial imagination in line with that of Doreen Massey, and her suggestion that space is best understood 'as a moment within power-geometries, as a particular constellation within the wider topographies of space, and as in process, as unfinished business'[92], rather than as Euclidean coordinates or a capitalistic commodity, especially as these have been critiqued by Lefebvre throughout this thesis. This might point towards wider cultural shifts in this direction, since, as Scott Bukatman notes, media respond to and prepare the ground for alterations in lived experience brought about by technological changes: 'Immersive media serve as both a physical and (therefore) a conceptual interface with new technologies and the life-world they produce'.[93] In both bringing the images of film towards the viewer and pulling the viewer towards them, stereoscopic exhibition perhaps traces a new relationship to space in the twenty-first century.[94]

On a more modest level, the use of stereoscopic composition for action sequences might be understood as breaking down the constraints associated with planar cinema, including those of ideological regulation, produced in part through systems of technological and exhibitional invisibility such as intensified continuity. That said, these systems remain in use within stereoscopic action sequences, and so appeals to an alternative spatial imagination which undermines, as Elsaesser would have it, the primacy of 'the fixed or grounded observer of the single point of view as predicated by the last five hundred years of monocular perspective'[95] are gestural rather than entirely achieved. As shown, the 3-D medium is an expressive tool that works in tandem with

[89] Elsaesser, 2013, p. 235.
[90] Elsaesser, 2013, p. 240, emphasis in original.
[91] Elsaesser, 2013, p. 244.
[92] Massey, 2005, p. 131.
[93] Scott Bukatman, 'Zooming Out: The End of Offscreen Space', in Jon Lewis (ed), *The New American Cinema* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 248–272 (p. 252).
[94] On this new relationship, see Ross, 2012, pp. 385–386.
[95] Elsaesser, 2012, p. 240.

other systems of representation in order to create meaningful and legible spaces within action sequences. It aids the clarity and spectacle of spatial navigation that the sequences depend upon, and can be used expressively to add to the processes of spatial appropriation that are depicted. The use of 3-D in action sequences can therefore be understood as an extension of the processes of place-creation and appropriation identified within this thesis.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis the central proposition of many spatial theorists – that '[g]eography matters, not for the simplistic and overly used reason that everything happens in space, but because *where* things happen is critical to knowing *how* and *why* they happen' – has been extensively applied to action sequences in contemporary Hollywood cinema.[1] Where such sequences occur has been shown to heavily impact upon how and why they occur. These sequences happen in space, but this is not the 'non-specific [...and] purely structural' backdrop that Martin Flanagan understands it to be.[2] No matter how indeterminate the space of an action sequence may appear, both the presentation of it and the movement within it by the action protagonist manifest spatial imaginations and approaches for inhabiting contemporary space. This is true of all filmed space, but the identified qualities of the action sequence – particularly bodily improvisation and the emphasis upon spatial negotiation and mastery – bring these considerations to the fore. The action protagonist, beset by threats, must learn to navigate through their environment hastily but comprehensively. By doing so they change it not only into something known but something flexible and meaningful, personalising it through tactile appropriation, challenging its restrictive qualities through physical activity. This process is by definition what makes an action sequence an action sequence, and though some action sequences may be more explicitly attentive to space than others, some form of pressured spatial engagement defines the form. These engagements, moreover, can be understood to demonstrate how space is both a constraining materiality that defines what those within it can and cannot do and is also, *at the same time*, a contingent meeting up of processes and trajectories that can be shaped and impacted upon by the individual.

In this, action sequences can be fruitfully read alongside texts on the so-called reassertion of space, as they mobilise ideas around the habitability of built space today. This reassertion, existing within and beyond the academy, is itself both a symptom of and a cause for shifts in the perceptual apparatus of the contemporary individual, as time-space compression and globalisation collapse a wide variety of temporal and spatial experiences into the daily lives of many of us. Fredric Jameson stresses that this compression has the potential to rob our bodies of 'spatial coordinates' as they have

[1] Warf & Arias, 2009, p. 1, emphasis in original.
[2] Flanagan, 2004, p. 110.

traditionally been cognised.[3] Technological processes, working within and on behalf of a nexus of globally-linked capitalist systems, generate changes to both the built environment and the manner in which the individual engages with and perceives that environment. While all modes of production have relied upon the production of space, Jameson suggests that the current one is '*more* spatial', or spatialised in 'a unique sense'.[4] Despite this prevalence – indeed, as a direct result of the capitalist mode of production being so dependent upon produced space and ideas about space – the power and instrumentalism of space is increasingly 'hidden from critical view under thick veils of illusion and ideology' by a system seeking to mystify its own precise (spatial) workings in order for them to continue operating ad infinitum.[5] Part of this operation is the creation of abstract space or non-places, sites neither 'relational, or historical, or concerned with identity',[6] and emblematic of contemporary space in their 'open[ness] to production and ephemeral use'.[7] Though ephemeral, this kind of space is nonetheless highly restrictive, partly as a consequence of its taken-for-granted quality. For Michel de Certeau, the individual is increasingly constrained by the technocratic frameworks that operate and produce these spaces, but since we cannot actively change or escape these frameworks we 'detach' from them and try to 'outwit' them whenever possible.[8] Such outwitting takes the form of appropriations of strategically controlled space, appropriations that are fleeting, unorganised and reflexive.

Simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, visible and invisible, contemporary space mystifies and alienates the individual. Responding to this, a further body of theory interrogates these spatial imaginations and reasserts lived, subjective spatial experience. Renewed interest in the body itself and the way in which all knowledge of the world comes to a subject through the materiality of a specific body within a specific place is emphasised in these accounts, as is the inherent contingency of any perception of space. For Edward S. Casey, this approach is a consequence of and a resistance to 'global capitalism and global communication networks'[9] and has the beneficial effect of 'implac[ing]' us within a space that might otherwise seem endless and

[3] Jameson, 1991, p. 48.
[4] Jameson, 1991, p. 365, emphasis in original.
[5] Soja, 1989, p. 50.
[6] Augé, 1995, pp. 77–78.
[7] Harvey, 1994, p. 293.
[8] De Certeau, 1988, p. xxiv.
[9] Casey, 2009, p. xxiii.

undifferentiated.[10] Relatedly, Doreen Massey calls for an imagination of space that focuses upon the unforeseen and the ludic, suggesting that place be understood not as isotropic, concrete and unchanging, but as 'a moment within power-geographies, as a particular constellation within the wider topographies of space'.[11] This work is indebted to Henri Lefebvre, who has provided a critical anchor for this thesis. Reacting to the failure of radical political change resulting from the protests of May 1968, Lefebvre sought in his writing – which previously focused more upon the rhythms of everyday life and their relationship to consumerism – to explore the social restrictions of the worldwide phenomenon of urbanism, these restrictions being spatial both in their concrete materiality and in their imaginative operations. Jameson, Harvey, Massey and many others took up Lefebvre's concerns (whether directly or indirectly, admiringly or reproachfully) and further contributed to the 'profound conceptual and methodological renaissance' that has transformed human geography 'into one of the most dynamic, innovative and influential of the social sciences'.[12]

Do the social sciences in turn influence action cinema? Probably not, but it has been the contention of this thesis that by drawing attention to space and depicting a human body that is able to negotiate, undermine and even destroy space, action sequences provide a useful site of investigation into these issues of habitability and how space is imagined under contemporary capitalism. They present scenarios of bodily agency, manifesting the urgent need to relate to human coordinates the increasingly disorienting built environments and cyberspatial networks that structure our everyday lives. They reflect the rise of abstract space and material 'non-places' through depictions of globally connected and technologically surveyed environments, but also invest these non-places with dynamism, energy and personal meaning, and in doing so they highlight the previous absence of these vital qualities. Action sequences indicate the way in which perceptual modifications relating to global processes have impacted upon spatial imaginations, these processes colonising the lifeworld of individuals to the extent that they seek empowerment through spectacular metaphors of spatial dominance. More generally, action sequences manifest the importance and primacy of place. As Casey states, '[t]o be somewhere is to be in place and therefore to be subject to its power, to be

[10] Casey, 2009, pp. 28–29.
[11] Massey, 2005, p. 131.
[12] Warf & Arias, 2009, p. 1.

part of its action, acting on its scene'.[13] This triad of spatial subjection, spatial involvement, and spatial manipulation is the conceptual framework at the core of the action sequence, as has been shown by the preceding chapters of this thesis.

Thesis Review

To demonstrate the affinities between action sequences and contemporary spatial experience a range of such sequences in recent Hollywood cinema have been analysed. In order to establish the central position of spatial appropriation in action sequences, this thesis began by outlining de Certeau's oppositional dichotomy of tactics and strategies from *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Chapter 1 explored these operations with reference to iconic architecture, the use of recognisable buildings such as the Burj Khalifa in *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* and the Guggenheim New York in *The International* highlighting the tendency of the action sequence to appropriate space, showing bodily activity capable of both undermining the regulations of built space and relating what might otherwise be alienating spatialities to embodied human experience. Furthermore, and in a related manner, this chapter showed that the formal qualities of action sequences place them in a symbiotic relationship with their settings, their approach to space being, like that of the action protagonist, closely tied to the qualities of the immediate environment. In this way it was demonstrated that space clearly matters in the action sequence, and that a fuller understanding of the construction of this space can be gained from the application of the work of cultural theorists and human geographers.

Chapter 2 set out theories regarding the qualities of contemporary regulated space and its relationship to capitalism, and tied these to a set of recent films which manifest the spatial consequences of the phenomena of time-space compression, technological surveillance and capitalist infrastructure that are associated with the unified worldwide space created by globalisation. The model of abstract space from Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* was examined at length, this concept influencing considerations of alienated and alienating 'space' (as opposed to 'place') in the work of Augé, Casey and many more. The anxious spatial engagement depicted and adopted by the Bourne trilogy indicated how the tendencies of homogenisation and instrumentalism that

[13] Casey, 2009, p. 23.

Lefebvre identifies as inherent in abstract space have become inescapable elements of contemporary (urban) social life, forcing subjects to resort to their own strategies of spatial abstraction. *Jumper* then showed that the mobility engendered by globalisation for a certain class leads to a loss of investment with place, as evinced by the touristic visual register of the film's final chase. The action sequences described in this chapter, though they portrayed a space that sought or came about as a result of homogeneity and global access, nonetheless retained the form's tendency towards spatial appropriation, leading to a tension between the designed purpose of the spaces and the engagement with them by the action protagonist.

These tensions were further explored in Chapter 3, which also built on ideas of spatial improvisation and creativity taken from de Certeau in order to show how space is personalised by action sequences in ways that can turn it into a place. The possibility for alternative styles of spatial engagement was indicated through comparisons of the character of James Bond with that of Jason Bourne, using the example *Casino Royale* and critical literature on that film. *Quantum of Solace* was then posited as an example of how action sequences personalise space through embodied physical acts, acts that can be appreciated by a viewer in a similarly embodied form thanks to the phenomenological address of the stylistic properties the action sequence. The concluding action sequence from this film valorised this bodily knowledge of place, the sequence's appropriation of an inert non-space by not only the bodies of the action protagonists but also their psychological traumas joining up with the film's overall attention to the intersection of globally powerful corporate enterprises and disenfranchised localities. The investment of space with the kinds of personal meanings and contingencies associated in critical theory with the concept of 'place' was shown to be a common attribute and consequence of action sequences.

Having established the ways in which action sequences are attentive to place, Chapter 4 then examined how action sequences themselves often function as bracketed, separate spaces of spectacle, and therefore – following the work of Mark Gallagher and Scott Bukatman – operate as paraspaces (bracketed and psychologised other spaces) in which the conflicts of the normal world are worked through in a hyperbolic manner. This observation revealed a further dimension to the spatial operations of action sequences, and underlined their capacity to provide empowering presentations of spatial agency,

doing so in *Sucker Punch* and *Inception* through the creation of alternative spaces in which action can play out. This empowering address was highly problematic, though, given that the creation of spectacular, psychologised space undermines any appropriations or place-creation that occurs there, an issue the films address in their depiction of commodified or corporatised mental landscapes.

The use of digital special effects in constructing space was then the focus of Chapter 5, which explored how the modification and creation of space through digital means reflects cultural tendencies towards totalisation and standardisation as explored by Lefebvre and Jameson. The effects of bullet-time and virtual cinematography, as mobilised by action sequences, were shown to indicate the ability of spectacle to map and order space comprehensively. As demonstrated through an analysis of *The Matrix Reloaded*, this process requires the exclusion of the profilmic human body and its replacement with a more manipulable digital body, which was understood to be an expression of the abstract spatial strategies diagnosed by Lefebvre, in which non-visual sensory data is devalued and the body is 'disdained, absorbed, and broken into pieces by images'.[14] Despite this, action sequences staged within explicitly digital paraspaces were shown to present the physical appropriation of the otherwise alienating non-spatial communicative terrain of cyberspace, a reading of *TRON: Legacy* indicating the potential of the bodily-oriented movement of action sequences to provide a body-centred appropriation of this otherwise disembodied global network.

Finally, a formal analysis of recent stereoscopic action cinema showed that it retains the filmmaking operations of classical and intensified continuity employed by planar action cinema, but that the addition of z-axis depth cues expands the environment in which the action protagonist is placed, and which they might appropriate. Using the Resident Evil franchise to compare and contrast planar and stereoscopic action sequences, and *Dredd 3D* to explore the expressive possibility of the latter, Chapter 6 conveyed the continued reliance of action sequences upon spatial appropriation, processes of place-creation and presentations of spatial mastery even in the stereoscopic format, and explored how this mode of exhibition can moreover underline and embellish these qualities. It was further noted that 3-D action cinema might be read for evidence of changes regarding the image

[14] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 201.

in contemporary culture, the flat screen giving way to a multi-layered, interactive and immersive environment.

Through these six chapters this thesis has sought to examine in turn several ways of imagining space, relating the expression of these imaginations to the form and content of one or more indicative action sequences. At the same time, the intention has been to build a model of analysis that is applicable to any further action sequence. This model includes the centrality of spatial appropriation to the action sequence's form and structure; the extent to which this appropriation presupposes and/or undermines top-down spatial prescriptions, and how these latter might be related to capitalist systems and the symptoms of globalisation; the manner in which this appropriation functions as a process of place-creation for both the onscreen protagonist and the film viewer; the importance of the body and its represented contact with the space presented; and the metonymic or allegorical functioning of appropriation.

Visuality, Tactility and Sensorial Address

The spatial appropriation presented by action sequences has been understood throughout this thesis as an exaggerated version of de Certeau's tactics. Yet, de Certeau's work concerns the real lived experience of everyday life, something generally anathema to action cinema. How might the connection between the two, the link between onscreen spectacle and everyday embodied experience, be investigated? An understanding of this link is necessary to fully account for the presence and spatial dynamics of action sequences, and to do so requires assessing existing work on how action films might relate to everyday life, acknowledging the reservations held by Lefebvre and de Certeau regarding images (and their potential reduction to detached signs or signifiers) in contemporary spatial production, and the application of phenomenological film theory.

Though the site of spectacle, action films are nonetheless considered to orient themselves towards real life and experience. Richard Dyer, for whom action films distil the medium's inherent fascination with movement and sensorial realism, directly connects the pleasures of *Speed* (1994) with daily urban experience: 'It is an orgy of

destruction of one of the great frustrations of modern urban living – getting about'.[15] Larry Gross suggests that action cinema of the 1980s and 1990s both raises and quashes apprehensions concerning urban space: 'hyperbolising our anxiety about urban crime while kidding our dream of easily overcoming it',[16] such films 'obliquely allude to our contemporary feeling of powerlessness' in their depiction of heroes who 'do not so much win as endure'.[17] Lisa Purse understands more recent action sequences to be more demonstrative than this, proposing that their 'fantas[ies] of expansive spatial penetration' provide a viewer with vicarious experiences of 'spatialised mastery'.[18] In all these cases action operates as an expression of the conditions of a viewer's life, dissatisfaction with urban living and contemporary space prompting the overcoming of these frustrations in a fantasy mode.

The action sequence therefore relates to the everyday spatial experience of the ordinary individual. De Certeau dedicates *The Practice of Everyday Life* to precisely this person, and he asserts throughout the book that personal action is feasible, even inevitable, despite the presence of overwhelming forces that might indicate otherwise.[19] Some see in de Certeau the affirmation that some kind of 'agency is still possible despite the baffling advances of technology, and the resulting incomprehensible futurity of space', and moreover that this agency centres upon the experience of the body in space, an experience long neglected by Western philosophy and social thinking.[20] Action sequences assert the importance of 'the practico-sensory realm'[21] of the body in Lefebvre's abstract spatial landscape of capital exchange, existent processes of way-finding and environmental acclimatisation hyperbolically presented as action spectacle, but nonetheless, in their fundamental operations, still functioning in the manner of the tactics of the pedestrian described by de Certeau.[22] However, though they depict physical empowerment, the extent to which action sequences are themselves empowering is open to debate. An action sequence may represent a triumphant body within restrictive space, the body's actions re-writing space to its own ends, but this

[15] Dyer, 2000, p. 19.
[16] Gross, 2000, p. 9.
[17] Gross, 2000, p. 8.
[18] Purse, 2011, p. 64.
[19] De Certeau, 1988, unnumbered dedication.
[20] Buchanan, 1996, p. 112.
[21] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 200.
[22] De Certeau, 1988, p. 98.

remains a *representation* of lived experience, not a *lived* tactic like those described by de Certeau.

The imagistic nature of cinema leads Lefebvre, in particular, to be suspicious of it. The privileging of the optical over the other senses, he suggests, reduces space to a text to be read and deciphered: 'In this way a part of the object and what it offers [to the eye] comes to be taken for the whole.' As a result of this supremacy,

> Any non-optical impression – a tactile one, for example, or a muscular (rhythmic) one – is no longer anything more than a symbolic form of, and a transitional step towards, the visual. […For this reason, contemporary] space has no social existence independently of an intense, aggressive and repressive visualization.[23]

In this way, as Lefebvre puts it unambiguously, 'the image kills'.[24] What it kills is sensory engagement and phenomenological being-in-the-world, cinema being a symptom of this prioritisation of the image. For Lefebvre, the prominence accorded to visibility at the expense of all else engenders passivity in the contemporary individual. Offered a plethora of commodified views for visual consumption, and required to navigate social space through the use of signs, the subject loses agency and surrenders to the system in which they are placed. This is linked to processes of time-space compression and developments in media technology, which operate ephemerally and produce a paradox at the heart of the cultural reception of mass culture: though 'mass communications bring masterpieces of art and culture to everyone', and therefore raise the general level of cultural sophistication, they simultaneously

> make their audience passive. They make them infantile. They "present" the world in a particular mode, the mode of spectacle and the gaze, with all the ambiguity we have already noted and which we continue to emphasize: non-participation in a false presence.[25]

Reduced to image, the world is available to view, but not to inhabit. This lessening of material engagement is part of the 'organised passivity' upon which everyday life is predicated. The individual is faced with images and landscapes; consequences of decisions in which they take no part; the inescapability of consumerism – all of which are closely interrelated and seem entirely beyond their control. A surrendering to image,

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[23] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 286.
[24] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 97.
[25] Lefebvre, 2002, pp. 223–224.

which is to say a surrendering to capitalism and built space as it currently stands, is for Lefebvre almost inevitable under these conditions.

De Certeau seems to detect something antithetical to this surrender: personalised spatial appropriation enacted under the nose of strategic powers, but operating in ways unmanaged by them. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* he describes the apparent gridded legibility of New York from the top of the World Trade Center, suggesting that this disembodied perspective (from which '[o]ne's body is no longer clasped by the streets') makes of the city a text, a text that does not resemble the lived experience of its citizens.[26] These citizens, in turn, deploy tactics that by contrast 'do not add up to some readable text – for that would make [their] movements knowable by the powers that be – but to a suite of disorganised and improvised synecdoches and metonymies' which cannot be read imagistically.[27] However, while these tactics have been used in this thesis as a way of understanding the actions of the action protagonist, other writers have interpreted them to be far from simplistic assertions of agency.[28] Mark Poster's analysis of de Certeau's model of tactics and strategies suggests that though in de Certeau's thinking the individual may act creatively in their gathering together of elements to, say, cook a meal, they nonetheless purchase the products from which this individualised meal is then constructed. From the standpoint of the capitalist system, the acts of purchase are all that really matters.[29] Barry Langford is keen to note that de Certeau is 'profoundly concerned, not only with the elimination of play from the city, but with play's recuperation by power',[30] yet for Massey de Certeau's work stumbles as it 'overestimate[s] the coherence of "the powerful" and the seamlessness with which "order" is produced', obscuring the involvement of the weak (the individual) within these systems of power and condemning them to ineffectual, doomed-to-fail

[26] De Certeau, 1988, p. 92.
[27] Kristin Ross, 'Streetwise: The French Invention of Everyday Life', *Parallax 2.1* (1996), pp. 67–75 (p. 69).
[28] On the agency of the individual in Lefebvre's work, it is necessary to call attention to his *Vers le cyberanthrope* [Towards the cyberanthrope], written in 1971, in which the synonyms of de Certeau's technocrats, whom Lefebvre terms 'cyberanthropes' (well dressed, Apollonian individuals of timetables, formality and rationality), are to be done battle with by 'anthropes', humanists of irony and humour who seek out the disequilibria, oversights and gaps in the systems created by cyberanthropes. Lefebvre, *Vers le cyberanthrope* (Paris: Denoël, 1971a); see the translated passages in Merrifield, 2006, pp. 89–92. The affinity with de Certeau's dichotomy is clear, although Lefebvre also seems to speak against this kind of interpretation of the 'State' as oppositional to the subject in 'The State and Society', where he suggests that to treat the state 'as a proper personality, facing the individual, with the same characteristics as the individual but on a greater scale' is 'a modern fairy tale', mystifying the historical and contingent nature of the state and capitalism (Lefebvre, 2009a, p. 63).
[29] Poster, 1992, p. 103.
[30] Langford, 2006, p. 48.

'resistance'.[31] This kind of reading of de Certeau is also made by Ian Buchanan, who sees in him 'a kind of hopelessness' which unsettles and undermines 'that which might on first flush have seemed romantic and charming' in the concept of tactics.[32] Tactics, then, are what the individual is reduced to, and are themselves an inescapable and seemingly intrinsic aspect of the capitalist matrix. As Scott Bukatman remarks, 'strategies and tactics are always locked in a dialectical development; strategic control must always be threatened by tactical transgressions that must as surely be contained. And so it goes'.[33] In this way tactical spatial appropriations become as passive and ineffectual as Lefebvre describes the non-participants in the false presence of a consumerist media society. These latter may (re)appropriate space – as in an example Lefebvre offers of a Parisian market transformed into a 'scene of permanent festival' by appropriation – but these procurements are doomed to 'morphological maladaptation' and failure since they cannot create their own space and instead only divert another.[34]

What is at stake in the work of de Certeau and Lefebvre is whether space can truly be appropriated in any meaningful way. Translating these concerns to the action sequence, crucial issues arise regarding the imagistic nature of such sequences, and the centrality of a kind of appropriation whose utopianism has been somewhat debunked by Poster and Buchanan among others. For de Certeau, any tactical advantage is temporary, as space belongs to the strategic order, even represents it. The result is the hopelessness Buchanan identifies: festival, narratives, and tactical acts may provide stories and coping mechanisms for the contemporary consumer, but their users are condemned to remain consumers, locked into the existent spatial arrangement. But while Lefebvre may state that '[a] break with the everyday by means of festival – violent or peaceful – cannot endure', he importantly adds that '[i]n order to change life, society, space, architecture, even the city must change',[35] and this observation functions as the guiding principle for much of his work. Only through changes in space can changes in life be made lasting. In the same manner that de Certeau's work seems utopian, but actually restricts agency, Lefebvre's work can stress spatial inevitability even though it actually advocates – at some length – clearly-possible change. The capitalist 'state of affairs',

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[31] Massey, 2005, p. 45.
[32] Ian Buchanan, *Michel de Certeau: Cultural Theorist* (London: SAGE, 2000), p. 124.
[33] Bukatman, 2003, p. 122.
[34] Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 167–168.
[35] Henri Lefebvre, 'The Everyday and Everydayness', Christine Levich (trans.), *Yale French Studies* 73 (1987), pp. 7–11 (p. 11).

Lefebvre insists, 'would be brought to an end if a truly unitary theory were to be developed' – a task he undertakes throughout his various works.[36] At the heart of Lefebvre's philosophy is his openness to 'the possibilities of revolutionary social change that comes from the streets'.[37] By identifying how capitalist urban frameworks and spatial imaginations function today, Lefebvre looks toward to a time when they may be overthrown. The 'abolition of Western metaphysics', as well as its corollary of a society based on state interests, might be achieved through the imagining of space in a different manner: a revolutionary spatiality based on the body.[38] In this way Lefebvre admits the possibility of radical change through spatial upheaval, something not found in de Certeau's anthropological text.

The action films of Hollywood cinema are often understood to marginalise any possibility for radical change. However, for Bukatman in particular, to read cinema as a repressively visual promoter of passivity and infantilisation is misguided, since spectacular cinematic entertainment engages a viewer in ways that such a restrictive model does not address.[39] This is certainly true: action films and action sequences depend not just upon 'narrative communicativeness'[40] for their effect, but also upon sensorial address, and crucially upon the reciprocal relationship of these two features. A combination of spectacle and narrative, Purse suggests that action sequences may be 'beyond our everyday experience' and 'an opportunity for the exhibitionist display of digital imaging technologies', but they can also emphatically foreground body-space interactions that align viewers with the action protagonist and also convey narrative information.[41] This alignment gives viewers access to the spatial engagement and acclimatisation achieved by the action protagonist, and as such provides additional information about contemporary space through the hyperbolic presentation of spatial appropriation.

In their avowed existence as leisure activities, the films examined here, so Lefebvre might have it, focus on distraction: 'rather than bringing any new worries, obligations, or necessities, leisure should offer liberation from worry and necessity', activities which

[36] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 12.
[37] Neil Smith, 'Foreword', in *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. vii–xxiii (p. xiv).
[38] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 407; see also pp. 166–167
[39] Buchanan, 2003, pp. 4–5.
[40] Purse, 2011, p. 28.
[41] Purse, 2011, p. 30.

'might compensate for the difficulties of everyday life' being increasingly sought in this regard.[42] Escapism, therefore, is closely tied to everyday life in a compensatory fashion. Responding to the felt lack of agency in contemporary space, do action sequences compensate by providing vicarious agency to their viewers? This is a rather simplistic model, and in order for it to account for the danger and violence that action sequences exhibit it is necessary to add some nuance by viewing them as something of a return of the repressed, in the manner that Wolfgang Schivelbusch theorises the psychological impact of train crashes during the late nineteenth century. Schivelbusch uses Sigmund Freud's concept of the 'stimulus shield', or what he terms 'industrialized consciousness', to understand how individuals accustom themselves to initially disorienting or terrifying technological apparatuses, forgetting – but not entirely – the 'tremendous and potentially destructive [...] amounts of energy' contained within them.[43] Witnessing railroad accidents, the nineteenth century observer was apparently struck by sensations of trauma and shock, even if they were not physically harmed. Accidents revealed that 'the original fear of the new technology ha[d] by no means dissolved into nothingness during the period of habituation [to the technology], but that it ha[d] only been forgotten, repressed, one could even say, reified'.[44] Thoroughly habituated to urban living, the viewer of an action film is forcibly reminded of the destruction that can be wrought by and upon the vehicles and structures of the metropolis, as well as the tight restrictions of everyday spatial frameworks and the energy contained within global networks of commodity exchange. Yet the body of the action protagonist invariably survives devastation and overcomes these strictures, their 'narrative of becoming'[45] tied to this capability. Ethan Hunt's relation of the Burj Khalifa to human coordinates through action in *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* serves to re-habituate a viewer to architecture that might otherwise seem tremendous and terrifying; in the Bourne trilogy, Jason Bourne consistently prompts the global security apparatus to mobilise itself against him, but he is able to outmanoeuvre it; the teleportation chase in *Jumper* demonstrates the interconnected and commodified nature of contemporary space, but asserts the action protagonist's ability to navigate through this space successfully; recent entries in the James Bond franchise stress the possibility for place to be created through personal, physical activity; the Matrix and TRON

[42] Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume I*, John Moore (trans.) (Verso: London, 1991a), p. 33.
[43] Schivelbusch, 1986, p. 161; on the stimulus shield, see pp. 161–168.
[44] Schivelbusch, 1986, pp. 162–163.
[45] See Purse, 2011, pp. 32–35.

franchises indicate how non-spatial cyberspace can provoke technologically-minded fears, only to assuage them through the staging of action sequences and heroic bodily action. Such sequences, then, prompt consideration of the 'tremendous and potentially destructive [...] amounts of energy' running through everyday spaces, as well as their alienation from human efficacy in their size, unknowability and technical innovation, but they then work, to paraphrase Schivelbusch, to re-industrialise the consciousness of the viewer through the depiction of successful spatial appropriation.[46] They rupture the surface of the stimulus shield, but then stitch it back together using the heroic and persisting body and actions of the action protagonist and their narrative of becoming. Reservations regarding the make-up of contemporary space can be seen as raised and then subsequently quieted in these operations.

This theory, then, relies upon the body of the action protagonist, a body that operates a site of sensorial alignment for viewers. Following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, phenomenological film theory asserts that all experience is inherently embodied (through being experienced *by* a body), and that as a result a film, which may be visual and aural only, is nonetheless experienced bodily, the viewer filling in the absent sensations through unconscious cognitive operations.[47] As a 'symbolic form of human communication' the cinema is unparalleled, thanks to its use of both the '*modes of embodied existence* (seeing, hearing, physical and reflective movement)' and the '*structures of direct experience* (the "centering" and bodily situating of existence in relation to the world of objects and others)' to communicate meaning.[48] Though cinema is representational, phenomenological film theory suggests that it is 'grasped not solely by an intellectual act but by the complex perception of the body as a whole'.[49] For Jennifer M. Barker, the responses triggered by film viewing 'are necessarily physical, full-bodied responses, because our vision is always fully embodied'.[50] Vivian Sobchack describes this process as a 'flesh[ing] out' of visual perception, the viewer's own bodily experience used to understand, and embody, those bodily experiences they witness on

[46] For the sake of clarity, the term 'industrialised consciousness' is invoked here, but it might be more accurate, picking up on Lefebvre's model of the usurpation of the industrial process by urban and urbanising ones, to term that perceptual equipment mobilised by the action sequence as 'urbanised consciousness' (Lefebvre, 2003, pp. 5–7).

[47] For Merleau-Ponty's overview of the centrality of embodied experience, see *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. viii–xi.

[48] Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 4–5, emphasis in original.

[49] Marks, 2000, p. 145.

[50] Jennifer Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2009), p. 74.

the screen.[51] For Jenny Chamarette, a phenomenological approach to film reminds us that cinema should not be understood as a text or a static image, but rather as 'an encounter with a slippery object that is experientially and temporally very different from an encounter with a written text or a still representation'.[52] In these ways such work refutes a reading of film that perceives it to be part of a logic of visualisation that divests bodies of internal sensation and breeds a kind of 'non-participation in a false presence', as Lefebvre indicates.[53]

Purse uses Barker's observation to theorise that the bodies presented within action sequences seek to address the viewer, whoever that viewer may be, who then reciprocally fleshes out meaning through this address.[54] Identification therefore becomes possible even in outlandish action sequences dramatising experiences that are different to those of everyday life. Moreover, for Purse, the representational strategies of action sequences call attention to 'the physiological attributes and corporeal attitudes of the body in action',[55] and in this way actually strengthen the sensorial processes Sobchack, Barker and Marks all identify. Accordingly, we do not just watch the action protagonist move through space in a concerted but unprescribed manner, 'powering through or of rising above to transcend the quotidian',[56] but *feel* this rising up as 'we take up and *invisibly perform*'[57] it in our own embodied viewing. Audiences of action sequences are subjected to physical sensations of spatial mastery through their sensorial identification with both the onscreen body as well as with the film itself.

Representations of space, accordingly, are related to the viewer's own spatial experience, as they are understood not abstractly or objectively but as 'a collection of possible points upon which […] bodily action may operate'.[58] For Merleau-Ponty, the movement of the body provides spatial knowledge:

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[51] Sobchack, 2004, p. 60.
[52] Jenny Chamarette, *Phenomenology and the Future of Film: Rethinking Subjectivity beyond French Cinema* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 6.
[53] Lefebvre, 2002, p. 224.
[54] On this fleshing out in the action film, see Purse, 2011, p. 54.
[55] Purse, 2011, p. 2.
[56] Purse, 2011, p. 64.
[57] Sobchack, 1992, p. 10, emphasis in original. The importance of this to action sequences is indicated, for Purse, by its absence in those sequences that extensively utilise digital stunt doubles, which may perform spectacular feats but actually lessen the possibility of such embodied viewing. See Purse, 2007, pp. 18–19.
[58] Merleau-Ponty, 1989, p. 105.

> By considering the body in movement, we can see better how it inhabits space (and, moreover, time) because movement is not limited to submitting passively to space and time, it actively assumes them, it takes them up in their basic significance which is obscured in the commonplaces of established situations.[59]

So too action sequences bring to light significances and qualities of space and spatial imagination otherwise (in the commonplaces of established situations, or everyday life) hidden. Furthermore, they work to extend the capacity of bodily action by presenting limit-cases of such extensions.[60] The action body, written about extensively within work on the action genre, provides an anchor for inquiries and understandings of space and spatiality, inquiries mobilised by this body's movement.

Concluding Remarks

In 1935, Walter Benjamin reflected upon the power of film to liberate its viewer from societal confines that are expressed and maintained through space:

> Our taverns and city streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up beyond hope. Then came film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling.[61]

The action protagonist retains much of the resulting *flaneur*'s knack for appreciating the commodities and structures of contemporary space even as they stand apart from it, able to chart their own course among the ruin and debris. This thesis has suggested in its own way that action sequences, like cinema of the early twentieth century for Benjamin, 'extend[…] our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives' even as they 'assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action'.[62] Indeed, it is in the very process of assuring us of the wide range of human fields of action that they reveal the very necessities that rule, or restrict, our lives. On another level, while appropriating space and making it more knowable, they also make contemporary space strange, focusing upon what is often taken for granted. In this they are akin to how Charlie

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[59] Merleau-Ponty, 1989, p. 102.
[60] There are problems associated with this form of analysis, the most important of which is the ideology of identification, something that Richard Dyer points to in his own essay on action cinema. Here he notes clearly that though onscreen action is related to 'human co-ordinates' and so generates excitement, those coordinates are ideologically coded through their belonging to an onscreen body that is frequently white, straight and male (Dyer, 2000, p. 18).
[61] Benjamin, 2004, p. 806.
[62] Benjamin, 2004, p. 806.

Chaplin's style has been understood by both de Certeau and Lefebvre. Both writers suggest that in his films the comic actor consistently goes 'beyond the limits that the determinants of [a given object] set on its utilization'[63]:

> Suddenly [Chaplin] disorientates us, but only to show us what we are when faced with objects; and these objects become suddenly alien, the familiar is no longer familiar (as for example when we arrive in a hotel room, or a furnished house, and trip over furniture, and struggle to get the coffee grinder to work). But via this deviation through disorientation and strangeness, Chaplin reconciles us on a higher level with ourselves, with things and with the humanized world of things.[64]

By changing the context of everyday life, approaching it as comedy in Chaplin or the source of spectacle in action sequences, the normal and routine is made strange, and so interrogated, revealed and perhaps humanised.

The production of space by these sequences has been shown to manifest many urgent issues regarding lived experience in contemporary space, and provides a working through at the level of the body of the contradictions and difficulties inherent in globalised, technologised and postmodern environments. From iconic, overwhelming architecture to the instrumentalist spaces of global transportation and the tourist economy; from presentations of the colonised lifeworld itself and the non-spaces of digital communication to the multi-layered spaces of stereoscopic action cinema, action sequences mobilise anxieties surrounding the spaces of everyday life by exaggerating them, but then compensate for these anxieties by presenting an onscreen body able to successfully negotiate them and whose movements, struggles and achievements are experienced by viewers in an embodied, reciprocal fashion through the 'kinaesthetic empathy that exists between our bodies and the film's body'.[65]

By reflecting the desire of the contemporary subject to 'transcend the quotidian'[66] and escape the 'technical systems'[67] of everyday life, do these sequences empower viewers? Or, as products constructed by and profiting from global systems of capital exchange, do they instead stand in for any truly emancipatory spatial action, compensating for the tightening strictures of state and corporate infrastructure with displays of unattainable

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[63] De Certeau, 1988, p. 98.
[64] Lefebvre, 1991a, p. 11.
[65] Barker, 2009, p. 119.
[66] Purse, 2011, p. 64.
[67] De Certeau, 1988, p. xxiii.

spatial mastery, envisioned as spectacular and therefore beyond the realm of possibility? Or perhaps, following de Certeau, should they be seen as temporary tactical appropriations quickly annexed back into the capitalist system? The work of this thesis reveals that action sequences accord to all three descriptions, being to some extent empowering, disempowering and contingent. They are representations of tactical, embodied appropriations; however, these representations are made possible by the consent of the networks, material spaces and resources of capital upon which they are enacted and whose operations they would seem to subvert. This paradox was most clearly visible in the Burj Khalifa sequence of *Ghost Protocol*, which indicated the strategic absorption of tactical action under the aegis of branding and marketing, a pattern that to a greater or lesser extent holds true for all action sequences.

Yet this is no reason to discount the empowering address of such sequences. Unpicking the precise nature of the representations of space in action sequences, and how these relate to everyday life and the spatial qualities that define and constrain it, has here provided some explanation for both the popularity of these sequences as well as their existence in the first place. It has been shown in the preceding case studies that action sequences map contemporary space in a physical, embodied manner, expressing its ideologies of control and management, as well as providing knowledge regarding its physical attributes. In this way they supply a version of the spatial knowledge that writers like Lefebvre, Massey and Casey suggest is crucial to rewarding lived experience. Moreover, assuring viewers of the capacity of the human body to survive and triumph within hostile or alienating environments, action sequences open up built space to imaginative possibilities, possibilities that may not be acted upon within everyday life but nonetheless form part of our perceptual equipment. In the same way that Lefebvre and de Certeau consider appropriation and the personalised re-tasking of space to be necessary, even inevitable aspects of urban life (expressing as they do potentialities of space and action normally hidden, and dealing with the reality of out-of-reach strategic systems through subtle subversion),[68] so too action sequences provide a required release valve for the anxieties and frustrations that result from the bureaucracy, scope and dangers of contemporary built space and the systems that regulate it. These sequences, like appropriation in de Certeau's model, may be made possible (and may even be prompted) by the very same strategic infrastructure they

[68] Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 166; de Certeau, 1988, pp. xxiii–xxiv.

subvert, but they nonetheless keep the possibility of tactical subversion very much in view.

Lefebvre has been invoked throughout this work for his insights into the production of space, particularly his model of abstract space and his stated plea for a new kind of spatiality focused on the sensory realm. It is necessary to conclude with comments on image, space and everyday life that he makes in the third volume of his work on everyday life, published in French in 1981, several years after the writing of *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre notes the return of the body and of tactile space, referencing as evidence not only interest in body language and a reappropriation of the body in feminist discourse, but 'a certain revival of the theatre' and a search for 'richer (three-dimensional) images'. In many ways his words here foreshadow the central appeal and operations of action sequences as they would develop over the following decades:

> The predominance of the visual – image, spectacle – over the corporeal is declining without disappearing – something that will slowly but surely alter the relation between daily life and space. Space is no longer defined exclusively in optical, geometrical and quantitative fashion. It is becoming – or once again becoming – a flesh-and-blood space, occupied by the body (by bodies). Judging from certain readily observable symptoms, daily life is tending to become, or once again become, multi-sensory; the quest and desire for a more actual presence are substituted for images as such.[69]

As a result of the increasing abstractness and perceived distance of technocratic institutions from everyday life, individuals place their trust and direct their focus towards 'what is proximate', towards 'the local', which

> enjoys various assumptions in its favour: it occupies a well-defined place; it can be reached; one can act on it and on the people in charge of it; it supposedly eludes the manipulations and abuse of power, for it possesses its own capacity for organization, and the people in charge of it are sensible and sensitive. In short, it is close to daily life.[70]

The quest for more actual presence in the immediate environment, and the desire to generate change within it, lie at the heart of the action sequence, its multisensory bodily address contributing to its empowering, if constrained, representations of spatial mastery.

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[69] Lefebvre, 2005, p. 102.
[70] Lefebvre, 2005, p. 99.

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